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UNDER PERSIAN SKIES

*A RECORD OF TRAVEL BY THE OLD
CARAVAN ROUTES OF WESTERN PERSIA*

By

HERMANN NORDEN

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East Africa," "On Fresh Tracks in the Belgian Congo,"
"Byways of the Tropic Seas."*

WITH FORTY PLATES AND A MAP IN COLOUR

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CHAPTER I

OFF TO PERSIA

Persia from afar—Bagdad—Safar Ali.

PERSIA has always been for me—and I believe for most—a picture-conjuring word. The images are various : sun-baked deserts ; snow-capped mountains ; a line of camels silhouetted against the sky ; veiled ladies ; gardens of roses ; trees—the trees of Persian rugs, not of the earth—on the boughs of which perch bulbuls and nightingales with beaks opened wide in song.

For long before I visited the country the Persia of the morning paper had as great a fascination for me as had the Persia of old history. Reza's kingdom—mere fragment of ancient stretch, pale shadow of ancient grandeur—seemed yet to trace back with amazing directness to Cyrus's kingdom. All reading, and every traveller's tale, indicated that the Persian has kept the sense of the continuity of his history, and the essence of his racial

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personality, as has no other ancient people whose history has greatly affected Western history. That, in short, the Persian one meets by the wayside to-day is very much the same sort of man as was his ancestor who went out with Xerxes, who watched and helped in the building of Persepolis, who went down before Alexander's army, and who conquered with his culture while he was being conquered by the physical power of the hordes that came under Seldjuk, Dschengis Khan, Tamerlane, and Osman.

Therefore the desire became irresistible to see with my own eyes ; to measure the impressions gained at long distance against impressions gained by experience. I sailed from New York, lingered in London and in Paris for letters that would smooth my way, sailed again from Marseilles, and lingered again in Syria for other letters. Then by automobile transport I crossed the Syrian desert, and one evening, toward sunset, I found myself in Bagdad, which, in spite of being Arabian and Iraquian and British, is an outpost of Persia. Shiah mosques, Persian coffee-houses, and the vast quantities of goods transported through Bagdad, are evidence of this fact.

Let me admit at once that Bagdad is a place that no one who values his illusions should ever



(Upper) MOTOR TRANSPORT, SYRIAN DESERT.
(Lower) KURDS IN MIGRATION ACROSS SYRIAN DESERT.

OFF TO PERSIA

visit. After Robinson Crusoe's island it is, of course, the most interesting place in the world to every child. And when, in later years, the Arabian Nights have been supplemented by reading about the city invaded by Persians, Macedonians, Parthians, Romans, and Arabs, and which yet managed to remain the eternally alluring Bagdad, the visitor is certain to meet disappointment in the modern city.

But when one has ceased to look for the City of the Caliphs Bagdad becomes interesting enough. My room at the Maude Hotel faced the yellow Tigris. Khaki-clad British officers followed by orderlies rode through New Street. British officials, native Iraqi officials—"Wogs" in the British vernacular, because of their habit of referring to themselves as "We oriental gentlemen"—give to the place the air and importance of the Near Eastern capital that it is.

Bagdad's interest and significance cannot be set forth in terms of population, business, and buildings. This is created by the city's geographical position. Here India and Persia meet with Syria and Europe. In the narrow, crooked lanes of the bazaar nearly every Oriental, and many African peoples, are represented by wares and vendors of wares. What the city means to the Europeans resident in all the

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stretch of the Near East one may surmise from the nightly scenes of gaiety at the hotels. Officials stationed at lonely spots seize every opportunity to come to the city for a little tonic companionship with their kind. At these dances are ten handsome army men for every woman.

Europeans assemble for the race meetings at Bagdad, but so, too, do all the other people of Iraq. Betting on the splendid Arabian horses is high and furious. At no track in the world have I seen more or better entries. And many jockeys are as thoroughbred as the horses : gentlemen who own their mounts.

Since my stay in Iraq was in preparation for Persia, the district's best gift to me was Safar Ali. I had advertised in a Bagdad newspaper for a travelling boy and interpreter. Safar Ali's answer came at the first possible moment. He wrote :

DEAR SIR,

I humbly and respectfully beg to bring to your kind permission the following few lines, that as your honour has been requiring a boy for travelling in Persia, I have come to you to get a job from you, as I am a Persian and it is only a few months that I have come from Persia taken British ambassador of Constantinople for tour in Persia and I have got

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his recommendation from him and from other gentlemen.

In the interview which followed this interesting communication I found that Safar was a handsome Teherani of twenty-three, and that he had every appearance of being alert and competent. He had travelled in India as well as in his native country, and had a fairly good working knowledge of English.

He now lived in Bagdad, and had the successfully transplanted person's admiration for his new home. To Safar, Bagdad was the centre of the universe. In later conversations I learned that something of his enthusiasm may have been generated by a Rotary Club instinct, since he was part owner in a coffee-shop there. A cousin was his partner in the business, and was resident manager. Safar said that during his own long absences as travelling boy his mother and his fiancée guarded his interests by keeping a vigilant eye on the cousin. How it happened that a Persian of twenty-three had a fiancée and had not been a long time married he did not explain.

As time went on, and our experiences together accumulated, I came to realise that Safar was as characteristically Persian, according to Western theories about the Iranian psychology, as he would

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have been if Morier had written him up to go into *Hajji Baba*. We had our bad quarters of an hour at times. I discovered him acting on the belief shared by Persians and Turks that the European's brain is shaped like a carrot, and that usually he thinks through the thick end, and only occasionally does a thought emerge from the tip.

After Safar and I had been together several weeks a British friend asked me, "Why don't you call that boy of yours *Mirza*?"

This happened one day when relations were more than a little strained, and I answered that I could not apply the Persian title connoting various sorts of distinction to a man who cleaned my shoes as badly as Safar did.

"Call him *Mirza* just the same," my friend said. "He is entitled to the honour since he can read and write, and acts as interpreter for you. Maybe he will do your shoes better if he hears you refer to him by the title that indicates he is your secretary."

My friend proved to be right. For me to go about speaking of my *mirza* seemed a piece of unconscionable swank, but it pleased Safar greatly, and smoothed our way together. He was with me throughout Persia, and we parted at Teheran with, I believe, mutual regret.

But all this occurred after that day in Bagdad

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when we made our contract. I only knew then that I had supplied myself with a personal attendant, and with mouth-piece and ears to supplement my eyes in my dealings with such Persians as spoke no language but their own.

CHAPTER II

ROAD OF THE DEAD PILGRIMS

Sunni and Shiah Mohammedanism—Najaf—Kerbela.

MUHARRAM, the first month of the Mohammedan calendar, fell that year in July. And since Muharram—with its processions, passion plays, and self stabbings, in mourning for Hoscin, dead more than twelve hundred years—is the time of times to sense the essence of Shiah Islam I wished that I could hurry the year forward a few months when I turned south from Bagdad to visit the chief Shiah shrine cities—Najaf and Kerbela. But though no festival was in progress I shared the road with many pilgrims, living and dead.

I had come into this Mohammedan country with no clearer idea of the difference between the two great branches of Islam than is usual with the traveller, and that is vague indeed. Even a short stay on ground where the mystic camel-driver is the prophet, is, however, enough to banish for ever the notion that a Mohammedan is a Mohammedan, and that no more need be thought about it. Sunni

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and Shiah become important words ; as important as are Roman Catholic and Protestant to the Christian. Iraq, two-thirds Shiah, is not only border-ground between Sunni Turkey and Shiah Persia, with all that position connotes of zeal manifested in intolerance, but it is also the holy land of the Shiahs, made sacred by the battles and death of their martyrs. At Najaf is buried Ali, cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed. The Shiah sect came into being for loyalty to Ali ; founded by those who believed that he should succeed Mohammed to the caliphate, since the prophet left no son. And Kerbela is the shrine city of Hosein—son of Ali and grandson of Mohammed—who forfeited his life in a proud and gallant effort to win back from a heretic caliph the power of Islam. More to be desired even than the Mecca pilgrimage is, to the Shiah, a pilgrimage to Najaf or Kerbela ; to be made in life if possible, but, failing that, or in addition, in death for burial.

The stream of pilgrims is sometimes a torrent and sometimes a trickle, but it is endless. On the occasions of the great festivals these two cities more than triple their normal population, but these are not the times when the dead arrive in greatest numbers. The gruesome pageant of the road is best observed when the corpse carriers straggle

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along singly or in small parties, with miles between.

We left Bagdad at eight in the morning, Safar Ali, the chauffeur, and I. Safar is Shiah. Since childhood he has, on occasion, mourned loudly for Ali and wept for Hosein, and he was, in consequence, a most useful companion. The tongue of the zealot is a great help to the eye of the merely interested, and Safar's tongue wagged busily in several vernaculars in gossip with people we met or passed.

At Kazimain, where we crossed the Tigris, we saw our first funeral party. A Cadillac stood outside the city, evidently waiting for someone who was inside the mosque paying homage to the *Imam* it honours; for Kazimain, too, is a shrine city. As many as fifty persons had assembled around the car, on the back seat of which was a large coffin, elaborately carved. Safar cast an appraising glance over crowd, car, and coffin.

"Must have been a person of consequence," he said.

Before we had covered a hundred of the miles that brought us to Najaf I, too, had standards of comparison by which I could estimate the worldly estate of the deceased. There were Fords carrying coffins; there were camels, and horses, and donkeys.

ROAD OF THE DEAD PILGRIMS

And there were men stumbling through the sand of the desert road with an oblong bundle slung rifle-wise across their shoulders. As various in appearance as the carriers were the coffins. Some were factory-made. Most were of rough, hewn boards, inexpertly fastened together, and tied about with a rope. Some were made of wicker. And out of one of the bundles carried on a man's back I saw bones protruding.

The road from Bagdad had brought us south through a grey waste broken by mounds, ridges, and crumbling walls—all that is left of the splendour that was Babylon—and by noon we had reached Hilla, on the Euphrates. We parked the car near the police station, and Safar and the chauffeur went to the bazaar in quest of food. I had brought my lunch from the hotel in Bagdad, but the zest with which I attacked it did not last. In the crowd that assembled round the car to watch me eat was a pilgrim, and the stench that came from the bundle on his back told me as plainly as did its shape that he was a pall-bearer.

Safar, returning, remarked that it was undoubtedly a wet corpse, and straightway entered into conversation with the man. This talk of wet and dry corpses is somewhat disconcerting at first hearing, but one soon becomes accustomed to it.

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The transporting of a wet corpse, which means a body not properly embalmed and dead less than a year, is forbidden by law because the state of decomposition makes it a menace ; but here, no more than elsewhere, can a prohibition be strictly enforced.

Through Basrah, the port on the Persian Gulf, and through inland towns, many wet corpses slip on their way to the shrine cities. Strangely enough, there seems to be no repugnance nor dread felt by the carriers in this close proximity to decaying human remains. So zealous are they to accomplish their holy errand, or to do adequately the work they have been paid to do, that many take the precaution of putting apples into the coffin in the belief that they will deaden the odour and prevent detection. I was told that sometimes these apples later find their way to the fruit stalls in the bazaars. The tale, authentic or not, restrained me from the purchase of much luscious looking fruit.

Certainly, if any apples were concealed in that coffin at Hilla, they were not effectively operating. Safar reported that the deceased had been a Persian living in Bagdad, and that he had been dead three months. His friend had set out for Najaf with the body as soon as he had been able

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to save the five rupees necessary to pay for a blessing and burial at the cheapest rate.

“ Who gets the money ? ” I asked.

“ The rich,” Safar answered, and grimly, for a devout Shiah.

There can be no doubt that the residents and priesthood of the shrine cities thrive richly because of the desire of the faithful to be buried in holy ground. The cost of a grave is gauged by its proximity to the mosque, and ranges from five rupees to a thousand, the latter price being approximately four hundred dollars. The consecrated space is limited, and there must be tier on tier of bodies if, indeed, this is the final resting-place of all the hundreds of thousands who have been buried there. A legend obtains that after a certain period Allah removes the bodies, or causes them to be removed. Most of the dead are brought, or sent, from Persia ; many from India, and occasionally one is transported from any country, however far, to which a Shiah may have wandered.

The special officer detailed for examination of corpses arriving at Basrah reported that last year he received bodies from Austria, Germany, Siam, and the United States.

Not all who make careful provision in their wills for the last journey to Najaf or Kerbela attain their

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heart's desire. An ex-official in the British Government service told me of having seen a boat-load of corpses start up the river, bound for Kerbela by way of Hilla. The boat returned in less time than the trip could have been made, and the matter was investigated. The boatman admitted having disposed of the corpses by throwing them in the river, but he produced a paper certifying that the bodies had been blessed and buried at Kerbela, and it was signed by a *mullah*. "You see, they will never know the difference," he offered in extenuation of his, and the priest's, dishonesty. Obviously, it is well to arrange to be carried in by a friend.

Caravansaries—low, grey, and fort-like—are built along the desert road at intervals of fifteen or twenty miles; a long enough day's march in the sand. No hills break the stretch of plain, nor hide the spectacle for which the pilgrims scan the horizon. Suddenly Safar caught it, and cried:

"Look! The mosque of Ali!" My gaze followed the line of his pointing finger, and in the distance I saw the great dome shining golden against the blue sky; the dome that is said to be visible a three days' walk from Najaf when the weather is clear. The foot pilgrims that we passed afterwards seemed to be walking more briskly, no doubt heartened by the sight that fixed the end of

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their long journey. We spun past a camel caravan of Persians with the men riding and women walking, and soon were alongside the cemeteries that lie outside the city walls. Then only the high walls themselves lay between us and Ali's shrine city, the most important city in all the Shiah world.

This little city of sixty thousand persons, on the edge of the Arabian desert, is the Rome of the sect; it is the seat of the church's greatest political and ecclesiastical power; home of the chief *mujtahid*, and, together with Kerbela, repository of vast treasure. In spirit and in aspect it is a mediæval city miraculously preserved through the centuries. For the last two years Najaf has had electric light, and for longer than that taxis have been setting pilgrims and other visitors down at its gates. Even the walls, which look so old, were not built earlier than the twelve hundred and fifteenth hegira—about a hundred and thirty years ago. But these are details which do not alter the essential quality of the city. It is mediæval.

Of course the car had to be left outside the walls. There is no room for such vehicles in the narrow, crooked streets. My stop at the police station outside the gate was a necessary formality, even though there is now little danger of the unbeliever getting into grave difficulties with the devout

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townspeople, unless he is extraordinarily insensitive to their taboos. Under British mandate Iraq is said to be as safe as Devonshire. The Iraqi policeman, smartly uniformed in khaki, was profoundly respectful when I mentioned the name of the man to whom I had brought a letter. Evidently Hamid Khan, the friend of my friend in Bagdad, was a man of power. A policeman was detailed to conduct me to his house. During that short walk I caught glimpses of various aspects of the city, and the impressions that I then received were later confirmed in my more deliberate gazings, and my talk with Agha Hamid Khan.

We had entered by the east gate the city of low, flat houses that line, and sometimes overhang, the crooked, alley-like streets. They seem to huddle together in an effort to be as near the great mosque as possible. Not a tree was to be seen, nor a blade of grass. The green turbans that mark the *Seyjids*—descendants of the prophet—made a refreshing and frequent note of colour. Our way brought us almost immediately into the roof-darkened bazaar with its pottery, *abas*, copper and jewellery, fruit and slippers—all the entrancing miscellany of Oriental wares. And the butcher-shops, too, with the entrails as well as the quarters of mutton displayed. From behind me I heard,

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“*Balek! Balek!*” and I tried to heed that command to make way, but did not succeed in time to prevent being brushed by a corpse that someone was carrying into the mosque for a blessing before burial. And there, just in front of me, was the gate of the mosque, high-arched and tiled and beautiful. I saw the court beyond, and a dazzle of brilliant colour, but an angry murmur warned me that I was offending the faithful by a too near approach to the gate of their holy of holies. The policeman had been directing me from behind—we had gone single file through the streets—and he now guided me around a corner. In another moment he was hammering with a heavy knocker on a massive door. We had reached the home of Agha Hamid Khan.

The house was mine. My host begged me so to consider it. I had been led across a street, up a flight of steps, and into a room where he was already busy with guests. He was blond and middle-aged, and I was not surprised to see that his clothes, but for the *khola*, were European.

Agha Hamid Khan is a friend of the British and their ally in time of disturbance. There was, however, nothing Occidental in the appearance of the guests, who all wore *abas*. When the introductions, which were in English, had been made,

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I knew that the eldest of the three was the Governor of Najaf, and the others were Persians, cousins of my host, who had come to live a few months in the shrine city.

I had expected to sleep that night in the car, since these cities have no hotels nor inns that welcome the unbeliever, but Agha Hamid Khan ordered a guest-room to be prepared for me. He must himself be away for the night ; it was necessary for him to go to Kufah with an Indian merchant.

I later learned that his affairs take him to all the cities of Iraq, and that his influence reaches to the high places in Teheran. We filled the time before he left with talk of the city. Chiefly he spoke of the mosque and its treasures ; the gifts of gold, silver, and jewels that have come to it through the centuries ; symbols and warrants of the love of the faithful, making this little desert city rich beyond any telling.

Agha Hamid Khan's house is of three stories—high, indeed, for Najaf—and from its roof, next morning, I saw the whole city spread below me, awaiting my day's wanderings. But though the mosque is a near neighbour, I did not have the glimpse into the courtyard for which I had hoped. A wall on that side of Agha Hamid's roof is an



TOMB OF HOSEIN, ELDEST SON OF ALI, KERBELA.

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effectual barricade. But there I seemed very close to the dome and four slim minarets, all resplendent in gold leaf.

One of the minarets leans, like the tower of Pisa. A legend says that at one time all the minarets in the land salaamed in honour of Mohammed, and that this one never straightened, but Safar insists that it was so built in order to point towards Meshed, the sacred city of Persia.

On leaving Najaf to go to Kerbela we picked up a pilgrim who was stumbling along past the cemetery that lies outside the east gate. He was pathetically grateful to be taken in the car. His first ride, he said, and Safar translated. He had been eight weeks on the way from his home in Hamadan, in Persia, carrying the bodies of his two sisters. Now that his holy errand was done and they were safely buried in Najaf, he had determined to go on and visit Kerbela, even though his eyes were inflamed almost to the point of blindness by the burning sunlight. It was because of his bad eyes that he stumbled he said. Except for our lift it would have taken him days to cover the forty odd miles.

Most of the country between Najaf and Kerbela is barren, but cultivated land begins a little way out of Hosein's shrine city. The sight of gardens and fruit trees, orange, apple, and almond, no doubt

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had a share in making me feel that Kerbela is somehow more genial than Najaf, even though the unbeliever has no warmer welcome in the streets of the one place than in the other.

Agha Hamid Khan had given me a letter to the chief of police. I found him busy at an English lesson, taught by a Burmese, who straightway abandoned his professorship for the day and put himself at my disposition. With him for guide I wandered about the streets—wider and straighter than those of Najaf—and had the tantalising glimpses of the sacred places that are the meagre portion of the unbeliever.

A part of my short stay in Kerbela was spent in the bazaar, looking at articles the vendors would not sell me. Much I longed for one of the small cubes that look like a child's building block, but which are sacred because they are made of Kerbela earth and inscribed with words from the Koran. These treasures are only for the faithful; holy earth on which to press the forehead during prayer. Through the Burmese I succeeded in buying earth cubes that lacked the Koran inscription; apparently there is no sacrilege involved in letting these go into an unbeliever's hand, and with them I had to be content.

Neither could I, nor any other who is not of the



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faith, buy one of the fork-like instruments, also inscribed, with which true believers beat and stab their heads when they are roused to frenzy by the sight of the passion plays. These instruments are made of brass or copper, and each of the five prongs represents a finger of Fatimah, the woman with three claims to reverence since she was daughter of Mohammed, wife of Ali, and mother of Hosein.

Had I been of the faithful I should have been given an opportunity, in both Najaf and Kerbela, to form a *mutta* marriage. These temporary unions, whether they are to last for an hour or a month, are arranged with the formality of a go-between and ritual. The *mutta* wife is paid for her favours at a rate fixed on a time basis. The unions end without ceremony on the departure of the pilgrim, and the woman is at once free to enter into another *mutta* marriage. No divorce is necessary; nevertheless these unions are marriages, legal for the time of their endurance, and with no resultant stigma upon either participant.

CHAPTER III

THE BRITISH WAY INTO PERSIA

Basrah—Muhammareh—Abadan—The oil fields—Bakhtiari—
Shushtar—Reminders of Alexander.

SYRIA and Iraq I looked on as preparation to the understanding of Persia. When at last I entered the country itself it was by the British road, and into a district forested in places by oil derricks instead of trees, across which miles on miles of pipe-line, curving like a black snake on the grey of the desert, carry millions of gallons of oil from the field to the refineries on the little island of Abadan in the Persian Gulf. A district where a thousand Britishers live and carry on the work of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company ; where, in addition to the actual working plant, they have built a spur of railroad, which, though short, is yet the longest in Persia, and where they have established hospitals, bacteriological stations, and schools. Where, in short, they are grafting Great Britain on to the south-western provinces of Persia.

What the political import of all this may be is a

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story variously interpreted, and certainly not yet finished. But this much is apparent to all the world—since the days of Napoleon Persia has been an invaluable strategic ground for Great Britain, because the way across Iran is the way to India. And when, early in this century, British interests discovered oil in the province of Kuhzistan, and a few years later the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was formed, with, eventually, the British Government's ownership of fifty per cent. of the stock, to Persia's strategic importance was added a colossal commercial importance, and Great Britain settled herself as determinedly and irrevocably in the south as Russia had long before done in the north.

It was, however, not as a student of politics that I entered the district. By good fortune this section, which welcomes no visitors unless invited, was open to me, and there, within the borders of the British sphere of influence, I was free to go about and see not only the workings of this gigantic commercial enterprise, but to find what I could of things distinctly Persian.

But before Abadan came Basrah, which seemed to me the true beginning of my Persian experiences. The blood, trade, and history of the old Arab port are so closely interwoven with its near neighbour that the political boundary which puts Sindbad's

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town into Iraq can be taken seriously only by a census-taker or tax-collector. In the seventh century Persia was ruled from Basrah by the caliph Muavia, through his governor Ziad, and in the present population of forty thousand there are almost as many Persians as Arabs.

Up to the time of the World War, Basrah was the same sleepy, oriental port that it had been for centuries. Suddenly it was transformed into the chief landing-port for troops and supplies. During the War years there was a floating population of many thousands of British soldiers, and, though the European population has now dwindled to eighty, the war-time activity had a permanent effect, which shows in the power-houses, electric light plant, hospitals, cantonments, and five miles of macadamised roads.

In Basrah were the first pavements I had seen since leaving Marseilles. The bazaar is Europeanised ; full of tawdry articles, but shoppers from many parts of the world make it a place of interest. The white *bellams* and *dhow*s in the river-harbour would give Sindbad the sense of being quite at home were he to suddenly return. Basrah club—during the War the Front Hotel—was my headquarters ; and an excellent point from which to set forth and discover what I could of Persia in

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the Arab port. Something I found in the coffee-houses, but much more in the house of Khan Mirza Muhammad, to whom I had brought a letter.

Mirza Muhammad proved to be an excellent type of Europeanised Persian, and with a career that sounds like that of an American self-made man. Born in Bushire, he learned English when a boy. He began his working life as an office attendant and stenographer in an English merchant's office, and from that start he climbed, round by round, into Persian politics. For several years he was governor of Najaf and Kerbela, but retired from political life to practise law.

Seen from without Mirza Muhammad's house was altogether Persian; inside it was almost as completely European. There was a library of English and American books. His table appointments were Western. But his closest friend in Basrah is an Oriental—a doctor, born in Lahore. The doctor wears a turban in token of his faith, as Muhammad wears a *khola*. We three picnicked one day at Mirza Muhammad's date plantation on the Shatt-el-Arab. Palms sheltered us from the too bright sunlight; a fallen tree served for table, on which a native feast was spread. The deliciousness of the fruit, and especially of the dates, lent colour to the legend that the site of the Garden of

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Eden lay only fifty miles away—at modern Qurnah, built at the point where the Tigris and Euphrates unite and form the Shatt-el-Arab.

Muhammad's talk was chiefly of law ; Persia's need to establish a uniform code. He talked, too, of the ungovernable tribes in the inaccessible mountains ; of their long history of pillage and highway robbery ; and of Reza's problem of getting these tribes in hand. Here outside the borders of Persia I first heard the note that was to be sounded again and again during the next months—the essential mediævalness of the once great kingdom.

Next day I chugged the rest of the way down the Shatt-el-Arab in a steam-launch ; the palm-grown bank on one side of the River of Arabs is Iraq, and on the other side it is Persia. At the point where the River Karoon joins the Shatt-el-Arab I landed. I was now at Muhammareh and on true Persian soil at last.

And not only on Persian soil. I was at the mouth of the country's chief river, and the only water-course it possesses that is navigable throughout the year. The Karoon is not a great stream ; it is merely great for arid Persia. With an average depth of four feet, the passage of flat-bottomed boats is possible for the eighty-six miles between Muhammareh and Ahwaz, a fact made use of by



(Upper) CARRIAGE ON THE LONGEST RAILROAD IN PERSIA.
(Lower) GODAR LANDAR SECTION, BAKHTIARI MOUNTAINS.

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the Greek admiral Nearchus, who sailed up the river after he had discovered the water-route to India by navigating from the Indus into the Euphrates. From Ahwaz he sent word to Alexander at Susa and received a triumphant, cheek-kissed welcome from the young conqueror, who had believed him lost. The old city has now become pipe-line headquarters for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

The British right of transportation on the Karoon gives a short cut to Isfahan ; and has gone far in making possible the development of the oil fields. In a few days I was to follow the course of the Karoon up to this country of fabulous wealth, but that first day I left Muhammareh to make the hour's journey in a launch to the little island of Abadan, a fragment cut off from the mainland by diverting the last short stretch of river into a channel. On the way I had a reminder of a significant bit of the history of this turbulent hour.

On the river lay a steam-yacht, permanently at anchor. It is the *Pahlavi* now, owned by the Persian Government, but only a year or two ago it was the property of the Sheikh of Muhammareh, who ruled this district, and lived in oriental splendour. His fortunes fell with the rise of Reza Shah, for he cast in his lot with the opposing forces. He

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refused to acknowledge Reza, and refused to pay the taxes imposed, but his career of insubordination came to a dramatic end. On returning from Basrah in his yacht one day he was met by a messenger with an invitation to a motor journey. The name of some friend of the sheikh was used, and the message was so convincing that he went ashore, entered the car with no suspicion that he was being kidnapped, and was whirled away to Shushtar, where he was held for a time under Reza's guards. Later he was taken to Teheran ; a house was put at his service, and every possible comfort given, but there he must remain—Reza's permanent, involuntary guest.

With Abadan began my true introduction to the British domain in Persia. The island is administration, shipping, and refinery headquarters for the company. Captain Clegg is in charge of the diplomatic administrative work. Genial and hospitable, he is as interesting a man as one would meet in a year's wandering. To his lot falls the receiving of the interested British and interested Persian visitors. Reza Shah, when Prime Minister, was received at Abadan, and taken into the fields ; so, too, was the present Prime Minister.

One feels the proximity of India, in that all the house-servants are Indian. Indian, too, is the

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manner of the Persians of the district, who invariably use "*Sahib*" in addressing a European. The bazaar is native, many of the inhabitants of the island are native, but Abadan is so essentially British, with that authentic atmosphere of home which the wandering Briton is able to carry about and set down wherever he tarries, that the island seems more a part of England than of Persia. These Persian Gulf Britons do not lack for sport to fill their idle hours. There is plenty of fishing at Abadan, and snipe, partridge, wild boar, and mountain sheep shooting.

The journey to the fields took me not only to the company's source of wealth, but into storied, ancient land. Two hours in a motor-launch on the Karoon ; three hours more in a car, on a road which follows the course of the river, and with little to break the monotony of the desert but two or three pumping stations, and we had arrived at Ahwaz—an ancient Persian city on which a modern British town has been superimposed. Ahwaz lies in flat country, but the snow-covered mountains of the Bakhtiari range are within view.

Here in Ahwaz British consul and Russian vice-consul keep alert eyes on each other. I was told that they are not on speaking terms. Unquestionably the Russian's chief work in the district is to

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watch the British, and to spread Bolshevist propaganda wherever possible. There are more Arabs than Persians in the native part of Ahwaz, and the Persians are chiefly Bakhtiari, the great tribe that has furnished the British with most of their labourers and police guards. Though the Bakhtiari are pastoral folk many have shown themselves willing to abandon the uncertain life of tending the flocks, and the semi-annual crossing of mountains and river in quest of pasturage. The surety of a daily wage for work with drill, or the establishment of friendly relations between their own people and the newcomers, has an appeal for these men who pride themselves on their strength and their acumen.

The Bakhtiari have a legend to account for their mental and physical robustness. They believe that once, in times long past, a strange malady came upon a shah ; two snakes were generated in his brain and lived there, but with heads thrust out through the sides of his skull. The court physician declared that these snakes must be fed every day with a morsel of the brain of a strong and clever young man. Many virile youths were sacrificed, for daily the flattering but fatal selection was made. Finally the selection was made of a young man who refused to submit without at least an attempt

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at escape. Would not the brain of a sheep serve as well as his own brain to feed the snakes if the shah did not know that a substitution had been made? He put the question to the representative of the court physician, tendering a gift at the same time, and the decision was that the experiment was worth trying. Only, of course, the young man must disappear for ever, that the shah might never learn of the deception. Daily, after that, a sheep was killed. Daily a young man withdrew to the mountains, there to enjoy and to pass on to his children the mental and physical vigour which had caused him to be selected for death. These young men named the tribe they fathered the Bakhtiari in commemoration of its strange founding; for *bakht* means luck, and *iar* means find.

Fifty miles across the desert, and away from Ahwaz and the river, is Dar-i-Khazineh—Door of the Treasury. From here starts the thirty-six miles of narrow-gauge railway which ends in the oil fields at the edge of the Bakhtiari range. Meidan-i-Naftun this centre of production has been called until recently. But now the name has been changed to Masjid-i-Sulaiman, because it is near to an ancient Zoroastrian temple, which, with the confusion of Biblical and Farsee lore one finds throughout Persia, is known as the Temple of Solomon.

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Masjid-i-Sulaiman spreads itself across the flats with many oil derricks ; it climbs over the hills with the villa-like houses of the officials, geologists, superintendents, and directors of the work. Here are cooling plants which make the hot climate tolerable to Europeans ; the schools and hospitals and bacteriological stations. There are athletic fields and social clubs, theatre and dance-hall. And in the cemetery there is a special vault for the care of Bakhtiari bodies, until they can be transported to some spot more satisfactory to the Shiah souls that once inhabited them.

Beyond the Valley of Oil lies the Bakhtiari range of mountains, ten thousand feet high, snow covered during most of the year—the difficult barrier that the Bakhtiari tribe must cross when it moves from summer to winter quarters. By virtue of a motor-car we made much of the hard journey in a day. In this district the Karoon is not the wide, useful, muddy-banked river that it is between the Gulf and Ahwaz ; here it is a mountain stream, full of rapids and torrents, and therefore impossible to navigate. The few people encountered during the long ride, and the infrequency of villages, made one realise how barren of human life and activity Persia's richest province would be had oil not been discovered.



UPPER A PART OF SHANGHAI

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An hour's motor ride from Dar-i-Khazineh is Shushtar, as far removed from the atmosphere of modern industry as though it were on some other planet.

Shapur's old capital lies on the caravan road from the south to Teheran by way of Isfahan. A few caravans with camels and donkeys are to be seen passing along the way, but, for the most part, the people are on foot—men, old and young ; old women and women with babies on their backs ; children ; all making the long, laborious journey. Some come into the city carrying bags of corn and wheat to be ground into meal between the mill-stones in the Karoon, and just as they have been coming for thousands of years.

Mongrel types are the people of Shushtar ; with stullen faces, badly formed bodies, and the general aspect of degenerates. The British are not popular in Shushtar ; their way is blocked in the bazaars ; derisive fingers and tongues are pointed at them. Therefore, since all Occidentals are likely to pass for British, my stay in Shushtar was brief ; and I did not visit the governor, who lives in a mediæval castle, and who is said to be fond of receiving and entertaining Europeans. Yet even a glimpse of the city that the first Shapur restored, and made his capital, left unforgettable memories. I crossed

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the long bridge made by enslaved Roman soldiers ; I saw the dam built in Shapur's day, which has, for seventeen centuries, defied the erosion of the Karoon, which is diverted into a granite-paved channel. Old sluice-gates regulate the supply of water going to the people for irrigation purposes. I also remembered that this was the city wherein Shapur held his enemy, the Roman emperor Valerian, prisoner for seven years.

Epic ground is all this section of Persia. Not many miles west of Shushtar are the ruins of ancient Susa. Near there Daniel is recorded as having spent his bad night in the lions' den.

And it was ancient Susa that the conquering Alexander made his headquarters, and where he staged the most amazing wedding-scene in all history, a symbol of the welding of the conquered nation with his own ; an amalgamation of the East and West.

One gets out old histories and reads again the story of that fabulous five-day feast when Alexander—thirty-three years old, and with a dozen years of conquest behind him—took the Persian princess Roxane to wife, and gave a hundred of his nobles Persian brides, each bride the daughter of a Persian noble, while, at the same time, ten thousand of his people were married to Persian women,



ATVANDER'S WEDDING

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many of them dowered by Alexander. Also how, during that five-day feasting and ceremonial, every extravagant dream of splendour was made real for once. Gold, silver, and precious stones everywhere; golden columns; cloth of gold canopies spread above the silver-based divans on which the bridegrooms awaited the coming of their veiled brides; the divan on which Alexander awaited Roxane, based with gold. Nine thousand guests at table each poured from a golden cup a libation to the gods when a trumpet announced that Alexander had poured his own.

It was a splendid dream of unity even though it was a conqueror's dream, and futile. How futile, one realises in modern Persia—a buffer State, squeezed between Russian and British interests.

CHAPTER IV

BUSHIRE

First impressions—Visit to a Persian home—Wassmus.

THE peninsula on which Bushire lies reaches like a finger of land out into the shallow coastal waters of the Persian Gulf. It is packed with flat-roofed houses ; a mass of dingy yellow when seen from a distance.

I had crossed from Muhammareh in the *Bandra*, a slow mail steamer of the British India line. We dropped anchor four miles out, which is as close as a steamer can approach ; for this chief port of the Persian Gulf has no harbour. The examining doctor came aboard at once and did me the double kindness of hurrying the quarantine inspection and of taking me ashore in his sloop. He was smooth-shaven and looked boyish until he removed his hat and showed a bald head. I complimented him on being wide awake and alert so early in the morning. " I have been up since four," he said, " waiting for this boat. I get twenty-five rupees extra if I board the vessels before six. Saves time, and they get

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away earlier. You're in luck that you're not on that boat."

He nodded towards the fast mail steamer considerably farther out in the water. A yellow flag announced that there was plague aboard. Had I made my Gulf crossing in that vessel I should have had to spend some time on the dismal little quarantine island instead of being able to proceed straight to Bushire.

The water was rough between ship and shore. We were an hour making the trip, and the doctor's little sloop seemed to stand on end, to Safar's great discomfiture. He had confided to me that morning that he had been near to death from sea-sickness the night before. "Like all Persians," the doctor smiled. Himself a Eurasian, he felt a right to be amused at the Persian dread of the water, which has been talked and written about so much that the jest has become classic. Apropos he pointed out the remains of the Persian navy, near which we passed.

"That's the *Muzaffer*," he said, indicating a revenue-cutter. "Yonder is the *Persepolis*." And there, indeed, lay a gunboat flying the Persian flag with sun and lion, looking fit and sea-worthy, but in reality dismantled, incapable of movement, her engine removed. This was Persia's fleet of a single

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ship, bought in Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century, brought in pieces to the Gulf and fitted together there. The *Persepolis* is a worthy successor of the two derelicts that for at least a hundred years were seen on these shores ; remnants of Nadir Shah's dream of a navy in the middle of the eighteenth century.

Nadir, ambitious for his country, saw in a fleet a means of winning to greatness. He had six ships built in Portugal. These were officered by Persians, but manned, because of the national aversion of going to sea, by East Indians and Portuguese. His plan was excellent in theory but did not work in practice. Both officers and men were devout, but the officers were Shiah and the Indians were Sunni Mohammedans, and in their attempts each to convert the other to the true faith there was general slaughter. The officers being greatly outnumbered by their men, the ships were captured by the Indians. So Nadir Shah's fleet came to nothing. Kerim Khan Zend, a few years later, had better fortune. But of his fleet of thirty-two vessels nothing now remains.

Even at the very door of Persia one is impressed by the help she receives from other nations. The Customs formalities are administered by young Belgian officials in the employ of the Persian

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Government. Formerly the army was officered by Swedes. The custom recently established of sending young Persians to St. Cyr to be trained is a long step towards self-dependence.

Bushire has no hotel to receive the traveller. That the British Residency would take me in was my best hope of a lodging. During the short motor ride there I was struck by the handsome, care-free faces of the people. True, I had arrived on a feast day ; there was a procession with a band in honour of some *Imam*, but at no later time did the people of Bushire look less happy. The lack of prosperity does not seem to affect their spirits. The people of the town are very poor now ; they have suffered great hardships since the War.

The British Residency is a large compound near the water. Though it was Sunday, and most of the officials in their homes eight miles up the coast, I found someone on duty. A room and kitchen in the rest-house was placed at my disposal, and there I began my itinerant housekeeping. Safar, helped by an Indian major-domo and a sweeper, made the place into a comfortable home. We went to the bazaar, taking the kitchen-boy with his basket to carry away the fish, green things, and oranges that I selected. Safar was much too

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important a person to be burdened with a basket. He was a Teherani among provincials.

“ *Kabar-dar !* ” (Get out of the way) he would shout as our little party proceeded through the bazaar streets, where, oriental fashion, all the wares of a kind were displayed in our vicinity. Vociferously he bargained, and invariably he triumphed. “ They can’t fool me here,” he said. “ In Bagdad maybe, but I know all about everything in Persia.”

But his poise and assurance left him when he came to a sudden halt in front of one booth.

“ See, *Sahib*, they eat *malakh !* ” he cried.

The stand displayed grasshoppers, roasted to a crisp brown, and looking like shrimps. I invited him to a meal of locusts, but he shivered with disgust and shook his head, only finding voice to entreat me to make a picture of the booth.

Back at the Residency I soon sat down to my first home meal in Persia. Fish, vegetables, and rice, and the *yogurth*, or sour-milk cheese, which one is able to get in the length and breadth of the country. After I had finished I looked into the kitchen and saw Safar, the old Indian guard, and the sweeper, crouching beside the fire on the hearth and enjoying their meal. I realised that it was because neither Safar nor the Indian were

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strict conformists to their religions that they were thus able to sit at food together.

Because it was Sunday I was thrown on my own resources. Nearly all Europeans, like the British officials, live in the suburbs. I decided that there could be no better time than this, my first day in Bushire, to look for Agha Mirza Mohammed Shafi Khan, the brother of the lawyer I had met in Basrah. Somewhere in the town, with streets like narrow, winding alleys, lined by forbidding walls, slit-like windows and closed shutters, heavily barred doors on which there is nothing to indicate the name or occupation of the inhabitant of the house, was this man who was sure to welcome me because of my letter from his brother.

The search promised to be long and perhaps fruitless. Bushire has no street signs. To the newcomer each alley looks exactly like the one just left. Fortunately everybody knows everybody else. Safar asked a question of his helper, and I was led straightway to Shafi's house, which proved to be just round the corner. It was made of stone, not an uncommon building material in Bushire, for quarries are only two miles distant. Some of the streets are paved ; a luxury after the mud of Syria and Iraq.

A bright-eyed boy answered my vigorous

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rapping with the heavy knocker. I gave the child my letter, and, with Persian decorum, waited just inside the door until word from my host himself should be brought. In a moment I was invited to climb the spiral stone stairs that led to his master's quarters. I found this to be the usual house arrangement in this part of Persia ; the servants' section is on the first floor, the master's above.

At the top of the stairs my feet sank into thick rugs—my first meeting with the Persian carpet at home. Shafi welcomed me cordially. An importer of merchandise, he looked the young business-man that he is. Bushire born, like his brother, yet his knowledge of his country is not limited to that city. He has lived in Teheran and is married to a Teherani. His two-year-old boy was the first Persian baby I was permitted to see.

Shafi was already entertaining friends. Over our tea and cigarettes we talked, I sitting on one of the chairs provided for European guests, the others squatting cross-legged on floor or settee. Charming folk were all of Shafi's guests, and at least one of them was a very learned man ; but of him I will speak in another chapter.

Because I was a newcomer and interested in all things Persian, these men talked about their loved

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poets, Hafiz and Saadi and Ferdusi ; they mentioned the ancient inhabitants of Persia, the men of Fars, who migrated to India carrying thither the Parsee faith. And one of them reminded me that Persia is an Arabian word, derived from Fars, but spelled with a " P " because the Arabs have no " F " in their alphabet, nor is the sound of it possible to their throats.

I told these men about my recent journey to Najaf and Kerbela, but they showed no enthusiasm at my mention of the holy cities, nor the fact that so many of the pilgrims had been Persian. The sole comment was : " Here you will find different conditions. Different provinces have different laws, customs, and manners of showing religious zeal."

It was, I realised, an impersonal manner of stating that I was not at the moment among orthodox Shiah. I wondered whether these men were adherents of the Bahai faith, a religion started in the middle of the nineteenth century by the twenty-five-year-old son of a rich Shirazi merchant, and which, in spite of persecution and bloodshed, has won many Persians away from the Shiah faith. The great Bahai temple in Chicago is significant evidence of the growth and wide appeal of the new faith, but its Persian adherents must practise it

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in secret when they are at home. Therefore, though I wondered whether these men were Bahai I never learned.

The "different provinces different customs" statement was borne out by Colonel Howarth, British Resident in the gulf. "You are not yet in Persia," he said to me. "You are on the Persian Gulf, an entirely different place. The Iranian blood here is mixed with Hindoo, Arab, and Turk, and the effect may be seen in the physiognomy of the people, and in their minds and manners. But even here they are Persian enough to be, together with the rest of their countrymen, more like the European than are any other Asiatics. Persians are the real blending of the East and West. Perhaps that is why they are a people of contradictions; contradictions within their own minds as well as externally. Rarely do you find a Persian who will answer with "Yes" or "No." He always says, and he always means, "Yes and No."

In nothing is Bushire more unlike the other cities of Persia than in its lack of historic associations. A few remains from Zoroastrian times have been discovered. Bushire is supposed to be the port into which Nearchus arrived after he had made the long journey from the Indus and up the gulf. Here the Portuguese navigators came, as they

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came everywhere, and they built a port that still stands ; the port which was rebuilt and fortified by the Persians during the short British-Persian War of the eighteen hundred and fifties. The port has played no great part in its country's affairs, but it is not without associations of the World War.

In Bushire I met Wassmus, one of the most romantic and dangerous figures in all the East during that greatest of all wars. Again and again in conversation Wassmus was mentioned ; even now, when there is as little talk of war-time happenings as possible. The first occasion was in Abadan. Captain Clegg dropped it casually into his talk about my plans. " Think of me when you go from Bushire to Shiraz," he said, " especially when you come to a little hut nine thousand feet in the air. I built it for shelter."

" Shelter ? " I asked. " Is there oil around there ? "

" Oil ? No. War-time. Turks wanted to go through Persia to India, and I was one of the people who had to keep them from doing it. Had to keep the road open, you know. It wasn't easy. There was Wassmus."

And he told me the story of the young German consul at Bushire at the outbreak of war, who appointed himself to the task of acting as spy for

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his country. His success was epic. The British war-maps, issued every week by the Intelligence Department, marked the name Wassmus over a district many times the size of England. That vast section was in his power—the power of a man working alone. Thousands of British troops were immobilised ; reinforcements had to be sent into Persia at a time when every man was needed elsewhere, because Wassmus was doing his work so sagaciously and magnificently.

“ A great man ! ” Clegg finished his story. “ I admired him very much.”

But destiny in the form of one of Clegg's native spies overtook Wassmus while he was at work in the Kuhgalu mountains, using his great personal force and charm to influence the tribes against the British.

When, one morning at the Customs wharf at Bushire, I saw a tall, lank, blue-eyed European trying to lift a heavy case into a motor-lorry, I, of course, had no idea that it was Wassmus. That fact came out in talk after I had given him a hand with the packing-case. Prematurely grey, and with a limp, Wassmus looks like an old man, though he was young when he entered on his war career. He talked a little of the hair-raising, hide-and-seek game he had played with his enemies. He ended

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with " All armies have their heroes. There never was a braver nor a finer officer than Captain Clegg."

It was moving evidence that war-bitterness is not kept alive by the men who bear gallant parts in the war. That Clegg should express admiration of his beaten adversary was much. And, surely, that Wassmus, who will, in his lameness, always carry the reminder that it was Clegg who defeated him, should express admiration of the Englishman seemed to me even more. Life is falling strangely now for this ex-diplomat, ex-spy, ex-man-of-power. Wassmus has a tiny farm a few miles out from Bushire. His chief source of income is his tractor. With it he pulls stalled motor-cars out of the mud.

CHAPTER V

COASTAL SETTLEMENTS

Voyage in the *Bahmiari*—Rustan—Old European rivalry in the Gulf—The young sheikh of Kharg Island—Ganaveh.

MY first departure from Bushire was sudden and unplanned. I seized the chance offered by Mr. Gardner, the British consul, to go north on the sloop *Bahmiari*, which makes the journey between Bushire and the village of Ganaveh about once in ten days. These trips are chiefly for the transporting of supplies and officials, but they carry a few other passengers when there is room. This time the sloop would make one of its rare landings at Kharg Island, a bit of Persian Gulf land that two centuries ago already had European stations.

Three in the afternoon was to have been the sailing hour, but at the last minute word came that we must wait for the next tide. Wind and water were too rough to risk a start. I had stored all unnecessary luggage. On this small journey I meant to be relatively unencumbered, but I had already discovered it would not do to set out with

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merely hand-bags. When the boatmen came at two to wake us, a considerable pageant of travel made its way towards the dock by the light of the Dietz lamp. Soldiers, carrying bed-rolls and boxes, led the way. Safar had his chest. The kitchen-boy brought up the rear with my typewriter and the wash-basin containing all the necessary toilet articles. Our lamp was joined at the pier by a few others borne by dark figures. We were interviewed by Customs officers with armed guards. They are always on the look-out for gun-runners, and my saddle-box looked suspicious.

The *Bahmiari* proved to be a one-masted sloop with a five horse-power engine. It lay fully ten feet below the wharf, and, since there was neither gang-plank nor ladder, everyone had to drop in as best he could. We were a dozen passengers in all, and we found places among, and on, the pieces of luggage that littered the deck, and slept until dawn. So smooth was the water that for once even Safar was content to be afloat. No one talked. There was no sound except the throbbing of the engine a few feet ahead of me. When the sky reddened, and the sun rose over flat, green shores, I took account of the people around me.

Three sailors manned the *Bahmiari* ; lanky, light-brown Persian Arabs, with drooping moustaches.

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They were graceful in their shirt-like, yellow gowns, their heads covered with turbans, and coloured shawls fluttering from their necks. Their gentleness of manner towards each other was as unseamanlike as their costume.

The passengers were from diverse stations in life. There were a few clerks, an army paymaster, two officers, and a grey-whiskered ex-soldier, now a servant of the officers. He was asleep on a red-plush box, gold-embroidered—the wedding-chest that every Persian lady has at marriage, and keeps throughout her life. Did it, I wondered, belong to the woman with the baby, the only person of her sex on the boat? She did not appear to be of the class that would possess such grandeur.

But the person who first caught my attention, and to whom it returned again and again, was a twelve-year-old boy. Persian unquestionably; but the handsome, clear-cut features, and the closely cropped black hair, gave him a Latin look. In his smart military uniform, and cap with shield, he might have been a junior cadet in some military school. When I first noticed him he was wrapped in a heavy army cape, and was lying on the floor asleep between the two officers. Obviously he was under arrest. Later in the morning Safar talked with the officers. Later still I asked questions



(Upper) THE YOUNG SHEIKH OF KHARZ ISLAND, AND HIS RETINUE.
(Lower) RUSTAN, A HOSTAGE OF REZA SHAH'S GOVERNMENT.

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ashore, and so arrived at the boy's story—the various versions of it.

Rustan Khan was his name. He was the son of Kerbelai Mirza Hosein Khan, a powerful feudal chief in the Kuhgalu mountains, who defied the Teheran Government. Reza Shah's demand, through the Governor of Shiraz, that Hosein Khan surrender his rifles was refused, and Reza sent his soldiers to take them by force. In his mountain fastness Hosein Khan was able to resist siege, and obtained supplies by raiding neighbouring tribes. Then the Governor of Shiraz sent a lone officer to try to make terms. Hosein Khan received him with the traditional hospitality, fed him and kept him over the night, but next morning delivered his ultimatum.

“Go now. And say to the Governor of Shiraz that I will not surrender. If you come again I will kill you, cut off your head and send it down to him.”

No more messengers were sent, but the siege was not lifted. In a skirmish between the Government's soldiers and Hosein's men several of the khan's relatives were killed. This disaster was mitigated by the fact that soon Reza's men began to desert and to go over to Hosein's cause. In his triumph he must have relaxed his vigilance

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somewhat, for his enemies managed to capture the boy Rustan, and carry him to Shiraz.

One version of the tale says that, in his interview with the Governor of Shiraz, the child threatened to commit suicide if full pardon was not granted his father. Another version is that the boy bared his breast and said, " Kill me, but do not kill my father." But whatever high drama happened at that meeting, Rustan did not kill himself, nor was pardon granted to Hosein Khan. Rustan was held as hostage. For months before I saw him he had been kept under guard at Shiraz, and now, on the *Bahmiari*, was being taken to some other place of confinement. The officers did not tell Safar what the place was to be, so that, when I left the boat, I supposed I had seen the last of this fine young boy, so pathetically caught in the coils of circumstance.

In the middle of the forenoon we reached Kharg Island, ten miles in circumference, and with four hundred people. Here was history of a different sort. When in 1754 the East India Company decided that the Persian Gulf district was too valuable a vantage ground for commerce to be longer neglected, they sent Mr. Francis Wood with instructions to establish an agency and factory, and especially to promote the consumption of

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woollen manufactures at Bandar Rig, on the mainland, and across a narrow strip of water from Kharg Island. The thrifty and far-seeing Dutch were already well established on Kharg. They had warehouses full of goods. They had built fortifications. They fished for pearls. The records of the company show that, soon after his arrival at Bandar Rig, Mr. Wood made a fortnight's visit to the island as the guest of the Dutch ; which visit, one infers from his letters to his chiefs, was not altogether for social purposes. He wrote :

Mynheer Kniphausen employs eight or ten small trankays with divers in fishing for pearls, of which there is a great quantity round the island. He sends Kafiri slaves on each boat, who receive all the oysters taken by the divers and deliver them to Mynheer exactly as they come of the sea ; so that unless a man should be present to see them opened (which is always done in private) there is no judging what success he has.

In another letter he wrote :

The Dutch leave no means untried to engross every means of trade into their own hands ; obstinately persevering in selling their goods at low prices.

Mr. Wood complained that the Dutch used so

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many men for their buildings and other labour that he was unable to get workers. There were letters recounting inter-Persian troubles which had a disastrous effect on Company affairs. Mir Hussein, who had governed Bandar Rig and had granted favourable conditions to the British Company, was murdered, and was succeeded by Mir Mohanna, who refused to allow Mr. Wood the right of collecting duties from merchants training under English protection. During an enforced evacuation from his station money and food were taken. When, in December 1756, Mr. Wood decided that the experiment was at an end so far as he was concerned, he wrote at some length to the East India Company officials, setting forth the conditions as he saw them:

By the Honourable Company's establishing a secure habitation or erecting a small fort, they would greatly augment the consumption of the British Woollen Manufactures in the Northern Parts of Persia, and all the settlements in India might at all times be supplied . . . also the Dutch would be prevented from settling there, which I am well assured they propose to do on account of trade and the convenience of getting provisions, as in the winter seasons they have no certain supply from any other port. They also find that the Persian merchants are averse to risking their goods thither (*i.e.* Kharg) in boats without which they

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cannot well go from Bushire. It is an even chance that they are dashed to pieces on the rocks. And if we were able to supply the merchants with goods from the continent not a man of them would ever purchase from the Dutch on Kharg Island.

But the Honourable Company have not, according to the best of my judgment, anything near a sufficient force in the Gulf to render an undertaking of this kind advisable, for notwithstanding the Mir of Bandar Rig might make all the fair promises that could be desired, yet his word cannot be depended on. It is hardly to be doubted that he would throw many impediments in our way through the instigation of the Dutch before the work was half finished, unless we have at least such a vessel as the *Swallow*, with two hundred able men, and a couple of gallivants properly manned to lie in the creek.

I have already communicated my reason for leaving Bandar Rig, which I still believe to be the most proper part of the Gulf to be settled in ; but even there (while the Kingdom of Persia continues in this state of confusion and anarchy) I cannot pretend to give you any great hopes of advantage.

This intrigue of commerce is old history now, but the flavour of it still clings to Bandar Rig, the settlement I was soon to see, and to Kharg Island. The remnants of the fortifications, a few tombstones with undecipherable markings, and the blue eyes

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and fair hair of some of the Lurs, are now the only reminders of the Dutch occupation.

Pearls are still dived for, and profitably, though as unobtrusively as possible. It is not well to keep the world reminded of the valuable industry. The land is fertile, but an island which breeds fishers and sailors rather than farmers. Boats from Kharg sometimes get as far as India. The stone-quarry, which is still in use, must have supplied the Dutch with their building materials. The village, one of the cleanest I saw in all Persia, has the sacred tomb of one of the Mohammedan great.

My hurried sight-seeing was done after I had partaken of hospitality. Abd-el-Resul, the sheikh who, as vassal of Haidar Khan on the mainland, is resident governor of the island, came down the dunes to meet us as we made our landing on the rocky shore. A man of twenty-three, blue-eyed and with hair bobbed in Lur fashion, he looked like a young Roman in his toga-like *aba*. He was followed by his uncle and headmen, a group of perhaps a dozen. The ceremonial greetings and responses having been achieved with the help of an Indian interpreter, the young island sheikh led us across the sand to his ancestral home—a long hall, with two small rooms. A table and chairs showed him to be ready for European guests, however rare their advent.

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The food was distinctly native, and was served in native manner. It was my first altogether Persian meal, and made an impression. We began with milk, served in small cups. My host dropped four lumps of sugar into mine, in sign of felicity and great goodwill. Rice and eggs followed, and I discovered that eggs are a difficult food to cope with when one has neither fork nor spoon.

Our luncheon was eaten hurriedly. One must sail from Kharg when the weather is propitious. The ceremonial procession that had led us to the house accompanied us back to the landing, and saw us safely across the gang plank, a narrow strip of board between rock and boat. The dock which had once been there has been washed away long since and never replaced.

Three hours later we turned out of the waters of the Gulf into Darahg Creek, and were at Ganaveh. The name of the village is a corruption of the old Persian Ganfah, which means stinking hole—certainly appropriate to this unhealthy place of mud flats, bad water, and myriads of mosquitoes. Ganaveh is a fishing village of about thirty clay huts. The Customs House is the most important building, for there the contraband guns are intercepted.

I watched the men with their nets, watched

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others building boats, and was myself observed by a stock-still populace in the market-place. Europeans are rare sights in the native part of the village.

The village could not have been worth a visit for its own sake, but it was the starting point for two interesting expeditions. Unless I had come to Ganaveh I should never have known Haidar Khan, nor the khans of the mountain tribes at the back of the Gulf.

CHAPTER VI

WITH KHANS AND FALCONS

Falconry in Persia—Haidar Khan—The Hunt—Another
glimpse of Rustan Khan.

“MY country is your country. My falcons are yours,” Allah Karam Khan said to me at Ganaveh. He was inviting me to visit him in his father’s home and go hunting.

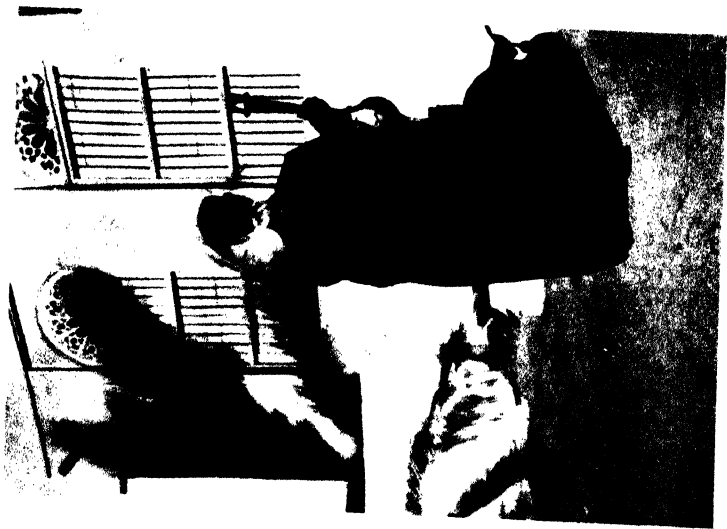
Thus forcibly was I reminded that falconry has never become merely a historic sport with the Persians, merely because recorded in tales, tapestries, and miniatures. Nor has it been kept alive merely by a few enthusiasts, as has been its fate in many countries. There are parts of Persia in which falconry is almost as zestfully followed to-day as it was in Europe after the crusaders, returning from Eastern lands, brought hawks on their wrists and their heads crammed with a better technique for training birds of prey to do man’s bidding in the hunt than Europe had known before. And the sport, which, in spite of its sporadic survivals and revivals, belongs essentially to feudal times, is no

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anachronism in twentieth-century Persia. Reza Shah dreams his dreams of breaking the power of the great land-owning, serf-holding khans ; he taxes and he fines them, and he causes their rifles to be seized when his uncertain soldiery can be made to function. In the north the effect of his action is beginning to be felt, but the south remains much as it has been through long centuries.

Thanks to Allah Karam Khan's invitation my chance to share in the feudal sport brought with it a chance to see something of the life of the feudal lords. Allah Karam is son of Haidar Khan, hereditary governor over Hayat Douad, a province which extends about seventy miles along the Gulf, and, with its average width of twelve miles, reaches back into the Kuh-Safid, the white mountains. The province also includes the little island of Kharg, twenty miles out from Bandar Rig, the town from which the old khan rules his people.

Allah Karam Khan, heir to all this power, is both modern and educated. His English is excellent, but he speaks with a slight burr caught from the Scottish surveyors and geologists who frequent the district ; for this is the southern area of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. He is a good-looking man in the middle thirties, with sunburned skin that has been fair. His bobbed hair was topped with a



HAIDAR KHAN



ANDERUN OF HAIDAR KHAN AT BANDAR DIC

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black *khola* shaped like a skull-cap, and made of fine goat-hair, somehow stuck together with soap and glue. He wore loose, black silk breeches, tan puttees, and a tan, Cossack-like coat that came well below his knees. A white silk sash, wide, with thick folds, was the final sign of his high station. Ordinary folk wear a belt.

We galloped the twelve miles between Ganaveh and Bandar Rig on Arabistan horses; mine the finest mount I had ever ridden. The beauty of Persian horses is no myth.

Names hereabouts, when turned into English, make description unnecessary. Bandar Rig means Port of Sand. And to that sandy stretch come rafts and *bellams* manned by Persian-Arabian sailors in *abas* and soft, fluttering shawls. The windmills which Allah Karam proudly pointed out from miles away, saying they had been shipped from Chicago, had no rightful place in the picture.

Not far from the beach is the cluster of buildings which makes up Haidar Khan's home, inherited with his title and his power. The clay walls gleamed white above the thick, green grass in the courtyard. All but one of the several buildings—dwellings, family mosque, stables—are low and flat. The one exception is the *anderun*, house of the women; this is three stories high and is finished

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with a latticed roof-garden. From it a tiny girl, dainty in a cotton dress and resplendent with a band of gold coins around her forehead, came running and calling at the top of her voice.

"She is saying, 'Welcome home, my master,' " Allah Khan translated, and he was further welcomed by several sons.

Then from the steps of the family mosque came Haidar Khan himself ; a grey-bearded, dark, keen-eyed old man, looking austere and venerable in the *aba* that reached his heels. He carried the *kalyan* with gold-tipped mouthpiece he had just been puffing when we rode into the courtyard.

"*Salamun Alaikum*," he said. (Peace be upon you.)

By now I had learned how to answer, "*Alaikum us salam*," but that was as far as we could go in direct conversation. Later, however, with Allah Karam for interpreter, we talked in the room set apart for European guests. An odd room, to European eyes, for between the cot at one end and the long dining-table at the other were so many small tables that the whole appearance was that of a café. From that room opens Allah Karam's study. The old khan never troubles the books in several languages that are there ; nor is he interested in the photographic and telegraphic outfits

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in which his son finds delight. But his questions showed that he was far from being unaware of the happenings in the world beyond his province. Where had I travelled? Was Benares at all like the holy Shiah cities? How loyal did I think India was to Great Britain? And what about the tribal risings in the Riff? And in Syria?

Breakfast was soon over next morning, and we were eager for the hunt. Out in the courtyard stood half a dozen horses, saddled and ready. Some seat-like perches—poles three feet high and finished with round, felt-covered boards—I had noticed near the stables the evening before were no longer empty. Three falcons had been brought out and chained there. In size and brownish colour the birds were like owls. Hawk beaks protruded from under soft chamois hoods, gaily aigretted.

"*Bahry*," Allah Karam Khan said the birds were, and cited their short legs and dark eyes as distinguishing marks of the species. From their methods in the field I, out of a meagre information about falcons, further classified them as a variety of lanner.

It was not hard to recognise the falconer and his assistant in the group of servants who waited near the birds. Their manner of authority set them apart, almost as much as did the heavy

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gauntlet each wore on the right hand. Someone unchained one of the falcons. "Zeyab," called the falconer. She flew to him and roosted on his fist. I watched the fastening of a leather strap; one end around the bird's leg, the other around the man's wrist.

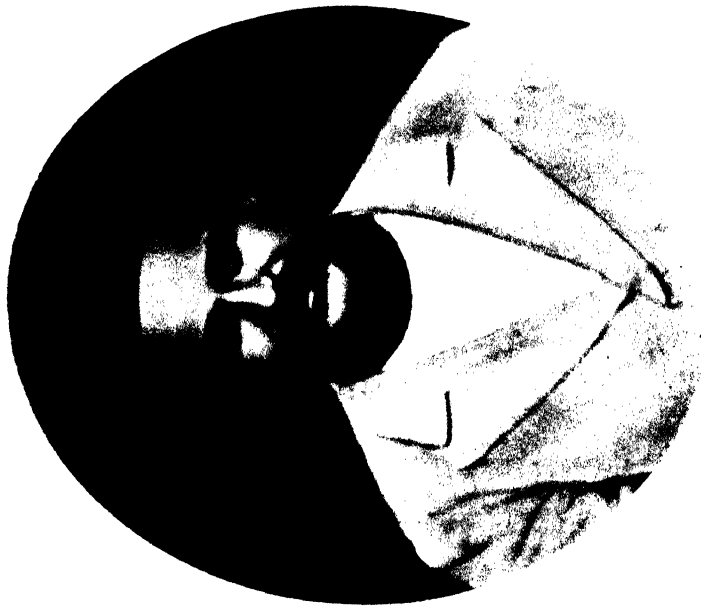
"Sheyab," the assistant called when the second bird was freed. She flew to his fist. For a little while no attention was paid to the third falcon, older than the others, and dingier in colour. Then a grizzled servant joined the group, released and called her.

"We may as well take her along, though she is too old to be counted on," Allah Karam Khan said. "They lose their zest and eagerness with age, just as they do with being too well fed. Zeyab is nine months; Sheyab only seven." And he told me that these names were of good omen to the birds. Zeyab means strong as a wolf, Sheyab means shooting star.

The three falcons made up Allah Karam's hunting flock at the time. A small number for him, who has had, and plans soon to have again, as many as twelve. What with bad crops and high taxes, times are a little hard just now even for rich khans, and falcons are costly. A good one is valued at not less than a hundred *tomans*, which is approximately



SON OF ALLAH KARAM



ALLAH KARAM KHAN AT BANDAR RIG

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the same number of dollars. Allah Karam spoke with pride of a *baz* that he had recently owned ; a short-winged bird with golden eyes, which fights higher in the air than does the *bahry* ; beautiful to see, and excellent in the hunt for partridges and smaller birds, but no use for larger game. This bird is never taken hooded into the field.

He had parted with one of his falcons when his sister had married a few months earlier. " Eighteen camels made up the trousseau caravan," he said. " I sent a falcon as a gift to the bridegroom ; a common custom with us." And this gift from her father or brother to her husband is as near as a Persian woman ever comes to owning a falcon herself. The feudal ladies of continental Europe and England fared much better with the sport, if literature and pictures are to be trusted.

The falconer is the chief servant in Haidar Khan's little army of fifty. During the thirty-five years the present falconer has been in the old khan's service he has given to hundreds of hawks the long and tedious training by which they are tamed to man's uses. Some were taken from the nest, or immediately after leaving it. Some were captured in passage.

But, whether he took them young or old, all had to be taught the same things : to trust and obey ;

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to submit to the hood ; to come to his fist at the sound of her name, even though the call came at the moment of clutching her kill. So thoroughly is the lesson of coming to call learned that rarely does a falcon escape. Even though she has "carried," which is to fly away with her prey, and has thus regained her freedom, she can usually be tricked back to the vicinity by a dead or tethered bird. Once within sound of the falconer's voice she is again a captive. She hears him call her name, and she flies to his fist. In the process of this training each bird must be carried about among people for hours at a time. After her daily bath and sun-bath she must be stroked with feathers. The falconer knows perfectly the delicate balance of food that will keep them sufficiently fed to be in good condition, and sufficiently hungry to be eager for prey.

I wheeled my horse aside and watched our little procession leave the courtyard. First rode the falconer in his *aba*, carrying Zeyab. Next came the assistant with Sheyab. Allah Karam Khan, the modern grandee, was followed by his sixteen-year-old son, dressed like his father, except that his coat was blue instead of tan. Grooms came next, and a servant riding a mule and carrying a picnic lunch. Bringing up in the rear was the old



Upper ALLAH KARAM'S FALCON DOWNING A BUSTARD.
Lower A YOUNG KHAN MOUNTED FOR A FALCON HUNT.

WITH KHANS AND FALCONS

man on a white donkey, and with the old falcon on his fist.

There would be, Allah Karam Khan promised, game in plenty. So early in the summer birds would not yet have flown north to escape the burning sun. But we rode for miles over sand dunes and through low brush without sighting anything. Once Zeyab was released to try her wings. She settled about thirty yards away, and returned on call. A little later the assistant lifted Sheyab's hood, and she showed the excitement indicating prey. "Sand grouse that we can't see because of the protective colouring," Allah Karam Khan said, but it was soon apparent that her arrow-like flight was just for the flight's sake. "She was lying to us," he said. "They do that often."

It began to look as though our hunt was going to be nothing but a hunt, so many miles did we cover with never a glimpse of wild duck, whimbrel, partridge, plover, or anything feathered whatever. The birds thereabouts must lately have seen many such little cavalcades, and learned to be wary.

Suddenly Sheyab shot over us ; about a man's height above our heads. The assistant falconer, following a side trail, and a little behind us, had released her. This time it was no false alarm. We dashed after her, both horses and men excited,

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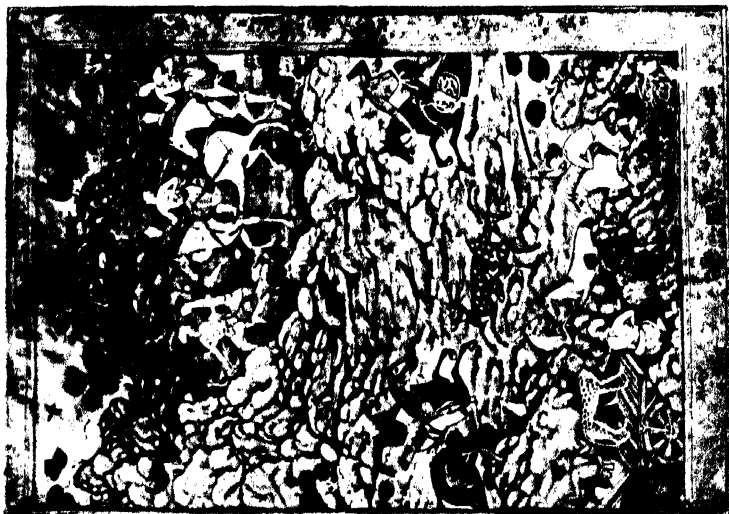
and arrived to find her downing a bustard, the only one left of a flock that had been there a moment before. These birds, which are about the size of a turkey, do not fly in their efforts to escape, but they are swift runners.

Sheyab was fluttering up and down on the back of the bigger bird, clutching with her murderous talons. The bustard lifted himself once or twice above the ground, and struck at Sheyab with legs and wings. She held fast until Allah Karam called her away, and finished the work with a shot.

This kill was the promise of more. A few minutes later we sighted a flock of a dozen or more bustards; probably the flock that had run for safety when Sheyab appeared in the sky. They were now running in a wide circle, with necks stretched low, and with wings flattened tight against their bodies, in a futile effort to make themselves small and inconspicuous. We circled about them, gradually coming closer. The three falcons were released at once. They shot straight forward, and swerved suddenly down upon their prey. Even the old hawk, that might not be trusted for mettle, had her bustard down when we arrived; clutching like the others and tearing with quick, frightened strokes. The bustard has small chance against the falcon, but he is feared as is no other



A YOUNG PRINCE WITH A HAWK
About A.D. 1570



FROM MS. OF NIZAMI

WITH KHANS AND FALCONS

prey. For in the struggle he is likely to cover the falcon with his slimy excretion, and a falcon thus contaminated is a falcon ruined. The wet substance on her wings makes flight impossible in the moment of danger, and she will never again be so game. Her nerve is gone.

We contented ourselves with our four bustards and headed back towards Bandar Rig. I thought of the pictures of courtly knights and ladies watching their falcons fight high in the air. I thought of Marco Polo's tale of the mandarin's great hunt, when ten thousand persons looked on while a thousand hawks were released. Still, ours had been a falcon hunt.

And if the hunt itself fell somewhat short of my expectations, I should feel myself unduly greedy for feudal atmosphere if I had failed to be satisfied with the dinner at which the bustard appeared. The long table at the end of my room was strewn with silver plates, heaped high with food. There were piles of glistening rice, thin, flat sheets of bread, and meats and sweetmeats of several kinds. At my place were knife and fork and spoon, thoughtfully provided for the European guest who had lost the fine old art of eating with his fingers. Eight servants attended to the wants of the six seated at table.

UNDER PERSIAN SKIES

The night before there had been only Haidar Khan, Allah Karam Khan, and myself, but other guests had arrived while we were at the hunt. Opposite me sat little Rustan Khan, the twelve-year-old hostage, whom I had seen the day before on the *Bahmiari*. Kharg Island had been chosen for the place of his imprisonment, and to-morrow he would be taken there by the soldier guards between whom he sat. Why Rustan had not been left on the island when we made our stop there, why he had been brought for this over-night visit to Haidar Khan, were mental questions that had no answer. Perhaps it was another step in the negotiations with the rebellious father ; an enlistment of the great Haidar Khan's power on one side or the other in Hosein Khan's conflict with Reza Shah.

I wished that I might talk with the boy, but I knew no Persian. The best we could achieve in the way of communication was to smile at each other when his fingers and my fork met on the bustard the falcon had downed.

CHAPTER VII

WITH THE MIGRATORY FOLK

South Persian tribes—Abdul Fat Khan of the Qashgai—Khans of the Qashkuli—Persian hospitality—Kerim Khan of the Boy-Ahmud—The true nomads.

MANY and baffling to the traveller are the tribes of South Persia. Lurs, Kurds, Bakhtiari, Qashgai, Qashkuli, and on and on—tribes, sub-tribes, and clans, apparently without limit. To know them in all their intricacies of relationship and affiliation would be the study of years. Most of them are migratory in one degree or another. Some are continual wanderers from place to place ; home is wherever the black tent is pitched, and they take care never to lose their skill at banditry and raiding for lack of practice.

But by far the greater number of these tribes merely migrate from a summer to a winter home in quest of pasturage for their herds. Their hereditary khans own great stretches of land in the two sections. The tribes have also certain variations in physical aspect, in dress, and in vernacular. And of course they vary greatly according to their seclusion

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from the world or their touch with it. The Bakhtiara have, for many years, been in touch with Europeans, and now the sons of the khans are as likely to go to Oxford or Cambridge as not. But with all their differences these people have one trait in common : a great tribal and clan loyalty, which results in little or no loyalty to the national Government.

Nowhere in Persia has Reza Shah's task of attempting to break the feudal power been easy, but in the south it has been, and still remains, hardest.

I owed my easy access to some of these tribes to the courtesy of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, for much of this district is within their domain. A company supply-caravan, bound from Ganaveh on the Persian Gulf to the oil camp at Meshun, sixty-five miles away, took me to the country of the migratory, pastoral people ; a country marked even on recent maps, " Unexplored and unsurveyed."

There were two service cars filled with supplies, and a Dodge car which carried Safar Ali and myself with our luggage. Two of the three drivers were Bakhtiari, one was Lur, and excellent drivers they all were. The Persian trait of meeting danger fearlessly and intelligently served them well on the sharp turns of the bad roads.

WITH THE MIGRATORY FOLK

Nothing that I had heard or read had given me any intimation of the beauty of the scenes through which I had to pass on that road, built for the oil prospectors, and which replaces the old caravan trail used for thousands of years. In my talks with the company men scenery had not been mentioned, so there was nothing to prepare me for the fact that here in Southern Persia I should find examples of every variety of mountain grandeur I had seen in other parts of the world; reminders that invariably surpassed the original. There were stretches bare even of shrubs that brought back similar stretches in the Rockies. There were stark, brown cañons without rivers. A dip in the road brought into view Swiss valleys, green, with stream-crossed meadows. There were patches of pine wood that might have been brought from New Hampshire. There were high, snowy peaks, almost Himalayan. And over all the blue Persian sky.

That Persian sky is a thing never to be forgotten. It mesmerised me. The perfection of colour gave a new meaning to the word blue. The old faience craftsmen must have mixed their colours with one eye on the sky.

With the great rocks that overhang the road, or rise above it, the imagination of the oil men has been busy. Crocodile Arms spread paw-like

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projections. There is, of course, a Cathedral Dome. And there are the Paradise Valley and Golden Stairs and Garden Gate.

Once I saw in the distance below a meadow with a herd of camels and cattle grazing ; that was the Land of Promise. Few signs of human life were visible ; for the most part the country is left to the rocks and the wild things. The pits, hollows, and black-rimmed boulders were all full of meaning to the geologist with whom I later covered a part of the road. Fossil oysters bear witness, even to the layman, that the ocean was once here, and there are numberless evidences of volcanic action. Half-way between Ganaveh and Meshun, on a high plateau, is Killu-Kerim. One looks back on an amphitheatre filled with rocks that suggest primitive gods and prehistoric monsters ; forward to the road that winds up and up.

There was one stretch of road where my mind was diverted from all this grandeur. Grasshoppers pelted against us ; grasshoppers in such vast numbers that they darkened the sky. Pale yellow in colour, but so light that, in the distance, they seemed to be snow. For as much as ten miles we drove through the swarm. It was a plague of locusts. There would be little of the tender green left on the mountains when they had passed.

WITH THE MIGRATORY FOLK

We had left Ganaveh at ten in the morning, and reached Meshun at four. The oil camp, covering about the space of a city block, has garage and machine-shop, office building, and a long, low dwelling for half a dozen men. This bit of Britain is fenced off from the Persian world by barbed wire, but friendly relations have been established with the tribes round about. Native police guard the camp. The native workmen live in a tiny village of mud-huts on a knoll at the end of the settlement. When I arrived an itinerant mullah stood in front of one of the huts.

The security officer of the camp lent me his secretary to act as guide and interpreter in my contacts with the khans of the migrating tribes. Elderly, parchment-skinned and hawk-beaked, Mirza Mahmud is himself a khan, and a member of a great Persian family. This person of consequence, wise in the ways of his people, is a diplomatic intermediary between them and the company. He has adopted European dress except, of course, for the *khola*. His English was inadequate, but with Safar Ali to act as interpreter between us, when necessary, he was of invaluable help when I roamed the country. We had the use of the security officer's car on the roads where motor travel was possible. But on many others we went on

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horseback, to Mirza Mahmud's discomfort. He was the only poor horseman I met in Persia. All his dignity was gone when he crouched in the saddle.

"Mirza Mahmud is afraid of horses," Safar said. "Also he smokes opium. I am fortunate that I do not." I took this assurance for what it was worth. It was Safar's tribute to the supposed prejudices of the *ferringhi*.

Near neighbour to the oil camp at Meshun, and not more than a mile away, is the castle of Abdul Fat Khan, a small chieftain of the Qashgai tribe. Built of stone, and on a knoll, the castle is surrounded by wall and moat, and is a fortified stronghold of mediæval days. It overlooks a green stretch dotted with the high, black tents of the khan's people, grazing sheep, cattle, and camels. Our approach must have been observed through a look-out hole in the wall, for, while I tarried in front of one of the tents, I saw a little procession coming from the castle. It met me just beyond the moat.

The leader of this little procession of welcome, a traditional courtesy, was Abdul Khan himself; middle-aged, tall, black-bearded, and with friendly eyes. From *khola* to white cloth shoes he was Persian in dress, and had made no concessions to the encroaching Occident. Abdul was accompanied



BLANKET WEAVERS AT KERIM KHAN'S



CASTLE OF ADRI'L KHAN, OF THE QASHGDI
TRIBE

WITH THE MIGRATORY FOLK

by his brother-in-law, a man of about his own age, who wore a thin yellow *aba* over his other garments. They were attended by two servants. Mirza Mahmud and Safar had a busy few minutes explaining me and my presence. Then Abdul led the way to the castle, through the narrow door, across a yellow courtyard, and up the steep stairs to the living quarters. The three rooms through which we passed were bare except for rugs. In the third we dropped to the floor, squatting or sitting on our crossed legs. Tea was brought in glasses held in silver cups, and while we sipped we talked.

Abdul's castle was, like his power, inherited from his forefathers. It is so very old, he said, that twenty years ago it had to be repaired. I would see many similar to it as I travelled about the country, because every khan has his castle, though many, perhaps most, have given up the custom of living in the ancestral home, choosing rather to dwell in a tent like the people. During the half of every year Abdul so lives, and this when he is with his people in their summer camp two hundred miles away, and within forty miles of Shiraz.

Here, at Meshun, were green fields of barley and tobacco, and gardens with cauliflower and potatoes. When the time comes to move on a few

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men are left behind to harvest the grain and bury it in pits against the return of the tribe early in the winter. Camels, mules, and donkeys are the pack animals, the people walk. A month is allowed for each migration. Thus, every year contains two months of travel, four months in the winter home, in which we now were, and four months in the summer camp a mile above the sea.

There is no idle time for these people. As soon as the tents are pitched, and the rugs spread, the regular routine of life goes on. The black tents have a look of permanence and stability that no white tent ever has. The fabric is made of goat's hair, and, like the rugs, is woven by the women. At first it may drip a little moisture, but it thickens and toughens with use, and soon is altogether waterproof, making a safe, dry shelter in all weathers.

When I approached Abdul Khan's castle I had observed some iron shackles on the outer walls, arranged in a manner that suggested crucifixion. I had been curious about their use, and had wondered whether they were paraphernalia of a time long past ; but when I asked Abdul about them his answer showed that in many matters there is little difference here between the usages of long ago and to-day. He said :

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“ A little while ago our flocks were raided by robbers. We caught them, cut off their heads, and hung their bodies on the wall for many days in warning to other robbers.”

Yet change is coming even in South Persia. To us, while we talked, was brought Abdul's little son, a two-year-old mite dressed in pink and black calico, and with a pink *khola* high on his round head. “ Some day,” I said, “ he will be farming your lands and leading your people to the heights near Shiraz.”

“ No,” Abdul answered. “ Nash-Ullah will never farm my lands. I shall send him to the American college of Teheran. People must be educated now. Since they took away our rifles we cannot guard our people ; our lands are of little worth to us. Always we have farmed and raised sheep and cattle, but a new day has come. First Saidar Ashair, the great sheikh of the Qashgai, took away our flocks. It does not help us that he is now held prisoner in Teheran, like the Sheikh of Muhammareh, because he will not pay fines to the Government. Our flocks are gone. Then Reza Shah sent soldiers from the north to take our rifles, and while they were here they raided our gardens. No ! My son must go to school, and then enter the army.”

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His summing of the passing of the old order had a note of tragedy. "I am sorry for you and your people," I said.

"But no," he answered. "Do not be sorry. It is hard for us, but I am in favour of Reza Shah's policy. The feudal system must be ended. This is no age for any one man to have such great power over his people as the khans have had."

My next visit was to chiefs of the Qashkuli tribe ; vassals of the Qashgai confederacy. Twenty miles away from Abdul Fat Khan's castle I found Amrullah Khan and his brother Hadi, dwelling in tents. Their castle, surrounded by fields of wild narcissus, had been allowed to go to ruin.

The two large tents of these khans stand somewhat apart from the community of fifty that shelter the several hundred individuals in the clan. Amrullah Khan received me with the same formal courtesy Abdul had shown. Manners do not deteriorate when the khans move from castle to canvas. Carpet hangings partitioned the tent. The back part was the *anderun*, housing the women and children. The front part was used by the men, and there we squatted to converse. Along the sides were rolls of rugs ; sleeping carpets put out of the way for the day. The fire-hole in the centre of the tent was the only place uncovered by rugs.

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In that fire-hole, about two feet across, burned charcoal ready for lighting the *kalyan*, and for making tea. The arrangements for the cooking of meals were in the *anderun*, which, of course, I might not see.

While we talked, baby goats, and chickens with strange, short legs, and a walk like a duck's waddle, strayed into the tent and across the beautiful rugs without interference, without even notice from anyone but myself.

It was pleasant to sit cross-legged on a rug and talk with the brothers. To really talk without the intervention of an interpreter. Amrullah's English had been learned with a Persian tutor who had gone to school in Bombay, but it served our purposes excellently. These men had inherited the lands of their father, who had been very rich under the old shah. The summer encampment lands are sixty *farsakhs* north—about two hundred miles, since a *farsakh* is the distance a man could travel in an hour on horseback. Amrullahi was willing to talk of the migrations in which I was interested, but it was evident he thought there was little to tell. "We take our tents and our rugs and our ordinary supplies. There is good shooting on the way; mountain sheep, ibex, and partridges. We have to be on the look-out for leopards; they

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attack our sheep, goats, and donkeys. And there are wild boars."

I looked from one to the other of the two gentlemanly, slender-boned men, rolling cigarettes with their long, brown fingers. It was not easy to visualise them bearing the responsibility of conducting several hundred people through regions infested by wild beasts, but it was obviously all in the year's work for them.

Lunch was served by many servants. Slaves? I wondered.

"Yes," Amrullah said, "but ours is not a hard slavery. We never sell our people abroad as sweepers or into other lowly positions. Slavery is, of course, against the present law. A few years ago the Government issued an order forbidding it, but you can see it would be impossible to enforce such an order among us."

The meal was bountiful. Young kids, partridges, and the high-piled plates of rice without which no Persian would know that a repast was before him. Rice there always is, but there is variation in the recipes for cooking. Sometimes one sees merely the large, white grains in a high mass; sometimes they are yellowed with saffron; sometimes cooked with almonds. Here in Amrullah Khan's tent I found the rice flecked with raisins. Hadi some-

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how conceived the idea that I particularly relished the raisins, so he burrowed deep into the plate of rice nearest him, carefully extracted them and piled them up in front of me.

The rug on which the meal was served was strewn with the family silver ; platters and plates and little cups to hold the tea glasses. There was also a silver and gold samovar, and a silver kettle out of which water was poured over our hands. Here were no knives and forks for the visiting European. The great feudal lords like Haidar Khan down at Bandar Rig, receiving many European guests, make such provision. But here among the migratory khans it is taken for granted that the visitor will be as courteously efficient with his God-given implements for eating as are the hosts.

Neither here, nor at any other meal to which I was invited by Persians, was there any talk. Obviously they believe that conversation and eating are separate pleasures, and never try to mix them. When a Persian eats he eats, and when we had finished we eructated with oriental politeness ; I most of all, for I was the guest and must indicate that the meal had been abundant.

Everywhere I found the hospitality of the Persians as great as is its legend. To have refused

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food to a wayfarer would have been an affront. Even when later I was on caravan, and often stopped at places where there was no obligation to treat me as guest, I never failed to mark that beautiful quality. The people gave me what they had. If they were poor they offered a bit of dried meat or a draught of camel's milk, horrible to smell and taste but nourishing.

Almost as soon as I had arrived Amrullah's baby was brought in. He was obviously not pleased to see company, and was immediately carried back behind the curtain, probably to his mother's arms, for the crying stopped at once. But the bringing of him was a ceremony that could not have been omitted. Wherever there is a son, of whatever age, he is brought to greet the guest. If the child is past babyhood he is likely to linger about ; not sitting with his elders, but standing and giving careful attention to their talk. This ceremony of allowing him to mingle with men while he is yet a child is part of the education of a boy. Splendid children they are for the most part. Nowhere have I seen brighter eyes nor more intelligent faces.

Before saying good-bye the brothers walked with me through the narcissus field and through gardens with orange, lemon, and mandarine trees. Their father had planted these trees for his own use and

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pleasure. Amrullah and Hadi sell the fruit to passing caravans ; another sign of the changing times.

They commended me to their cousin, Fat-Ullah Khan, about sixty miles north, near Garaghula. I could not miss his castle, they said. It was not large, but was in an open field near a cone-shaped tomb, the Tomb of the Madman.

I scented an interesting bit of legend, but I was unable to learn much. Mirza Mahmud was vague. A madman ? Yes ! A mad sheikh. Babu Kellu had been his name. He had had great power, and had terrorised the country years before.

Nor was I able to get much information about the Tomb of the Blind Boy farther along the way. It was nothing but a pile of stones, and I was told a vague story that he had been a Turcoman, a general, and a hero.

I was now in a beautiful mountain country. Camels grazed in green valleys. Whilst a tyre was being repaired I wandered about and met a wayfarer who opened his bundle wrapped in a square of bright homespun cloth and gave me an orange. I had a glimpse of the other contents of the handkerchief : a bit of clothing, a hammer and chisel. He was an itinerant carpenter.

We were on our way to Godar-i-Cham, on the

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other side of the Zuhra Rud, where we were to be met and taken to the Garaghula oil-testing station. Yonder was the snow-covered Kummuh Kuh, highest peak in the Kuhgalu range. Here the river rushes with a velocity that makes crossing in a boat impossible. The oil men attempted a cable-ferry, but that, too, was swept away, and the only means of transport to Godar-i-Cham is by a wooden platform pulled on a strong cable attached to posts on the river banks. Both posts and cables are high, to provide against rising water, so the boarding of the platform must be achieved by a leap into the air, then by seizing the edge of the platform and lifting oneself on to it by strength of muscle. Needless to say we sent the car back to Meshun when we came to the river. In the intricate matter of going aboard I think I made a better showing than did Mirza Mahmud, but, of course, I could not see myself. Safar, young and lithèr, made the leap and lift with skill and grace. The manager of the Garaghula camp was waiting on the other bank, gave orders to have us pulled across, and the disembarkment was less difficult than going aboard.

There was no occasion to linger in Godar-i-Cham, which is nothing but a few huts and the company's wireless station, but, just as I was stepping into the manager's car to drive to Garaghula, a letter



(Upper) VIEW OVER GARAGHULA CAMP.

(Lower) SAFAR ALI (Centre) AND NOMADS.

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was handed to me. An Armenian boy, doing his day's work in the wireless station, had received the message that told of a stranger's coming, and it had set him hoping and dreaming of a chance to get out into the wide world. Here is the letter :—

DEAR SIR,

This may interest you :

I am nineteen, my profession is telegraphist. I get eternal spring of love toward education, in this country there is no means by which a man can educate himself, of course I got no one to look after nor anyone to look after me. In other words, orphan. I could have gone to other country for study but I am penniless. I can speak English, Persian and Arabic perfectly so far. I understand that you came down to see Persia only, if you would be kind enough to take me with you whilst returning back to America, I should be glad to come as a servant without pay, but passage and food, hence arrange for me to study any of the lines you think I can progress with, and shall then repay you double the amount you invest in my study, etc. If I shall be so fortunate as to see you in person you will certainly think I am worth taking. If you wish me to come with you during your journey in Persia in order to be useful to you in interpreting the language, or to be useful to you in other respects I shall instantly resign my post and obey, a reply in the affirmative is earnestly requested.

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Of course I wrote, but my letter could bring nothing but disappointment to the lad who was yearning to migrate. I already had one Persian boy on my hands.

Twelve miles above Godar-i-Cham is the Garaghula station, and those miles are the most beautiful of the entire journey from the Gulf. The station is on a plateau four thousand feet high, half circled by the mountain range in which Kuh-i-Dina rises higher than seventeen thousand feet. When I arrived this giant seemed within reaching distance ; an atmospheric clarity that presages rain. Half a dozen tents on a green meadow, accommodating manager, geologist, engineer, and drillers, make up the station. A major of the Persian army and one soldier are stationed there, symbols of protection rather than protection itself, which last is provided by tribal guards hired by the company. Beds of heliotrope, scarlet pimpernel, and other flowers were in front of some of the tents. The manager, who had come from Rangoon about a year before, said, " Our gardens here last only a little while. The summer is frightfully hot, and the sun burns everything up." I stood appalled at the thought of heat so intense that a man from Burmah should consider it worthy of comment.

The tribes hereabout, though nomadic by

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heredity, are now tending toward a settled life. For example, there is the Babui, affiliated with the Boy-Ahmud tribe, which forms a unit of the Kuhgalu nation. Kerim Khan is the present chieftain of the Babui; his lands begin about twenty-five miles from the Garaghula oil camp. Kerim's is a tribe that leaves its mountain home only to go down to the nearby valleys in the coldest months.

Word of my coming was sent to Kerim Khan. It was arranged that we should motor part of the way, but that at a given point he should meet us with horses. There he awaited us, proudly sitting on his fine mount—a wilder type of khan than any I had yet seen. He did not wear the customary *aba*, but a gown of green and brown striped cloth with long silk sleeves. His *khola* sat rakishly on his tousled hair; his moustache was neglected. In matters of form and courtesy he proved to be no less punctilious than are the khans more carefully groomed.

Tea before lunch was not served in the glasses to which I had become accustomed, but in cups of exquisite beauty. "Like Chinese porcelain," I said.

"It is Chinese porcelain," Mirza Mahmud explained. "Many years ago my people wished to

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improve their pottery and they sent into China for artisans to come and teach us. The Chinese brought samples of many designs and colours. Most of that valuable china has been carried away to Europe, but bits of it may still be found in various parts of Persia. None was successfully made here. The clay of Persia is not suitable for making fine china."

Kerim Khan rents out his land in small tracts, and is himself a truck farmer. The Babui tribe have not the space, nor perhaps the soil, for barley and other grains. Their bread is made from acorns ground into meal, and they use acorns, too, in tanning their leather. Out in the open near Kerim Khan's tent I saw women weaving carpets. Their faces were uncovered while they worked, but they kept them carefully turned away from us. Here in the south the people are much stricter in this matter than in the north, where, up to maturity, girls go unveiled.

On our ride back to camp we passed a group of true nomads—wild-looking and unkempt—near a cluster of small black tents. Mirza Mahmud advised that we should approach very slowly, because one of our boys had a rifle for bird shooting, and we might, in consequence, be mistaken for soldiers. These nomads, he said, were Pash



(Upper) CHEESE MAKERS AT KERIM KHAN'S.

(Lower) KERIM KHAN OF THE BOY AHMUD TRIBE.

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Shakums, and the tribe had lately had several unpleasant encounters with soldiers. They had been caught stealing, and had suffered the *bastinado*—blows on the soles of their feet. They were, therefore, eager for an opportunity to even the score.

At close range they proved friendly enough. An old man invited us into his tent. There, as in the tents of the khans, were rugs of great beauty and value. And in the centre of his tent I saw, for the first time, the deep fire-hole which is the family hearth in the mean mud-huts of Persia. It is not the shallow hollow for charcoal. It is a little pit, and the family sit at the edge of it, dangling their legs to the warmth by the fire at the bottom.

Mirza Mahmud assured me that killing and robbery were all in the day's routine with the Pash Shakums. Even though most of their rifles had been confiscated their raiding had not ceased. I was willing to accept this character for them because of their wild and menacing look.

Yet when, the next day, one of the geologists and I took shelter between two huge rocks from a rainstorm that threatened to wash away the mountain, these nomads came to our rescue. The rain had come down suddenly and in torrents. In the comparatively sheltered cleft between

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boulders we stood on clay and sand that the wind of ages had piled into terraces. We climbed to the highest of them to escape the swiftly rising river. Below us were the horses, terror stricken. When the worst of the storm had passed, and though we dared not yet leave our refuge, some of the nomads came. Expertly but inexplicably they got us away from that perilous spot. Even the horses were saved.

Generations of nomadry had given them the wisdom and skill to grapple with nature's furies. They were equipped as no man who has taken to houses can ever hope to be again.

My last days in the mountains were spent in a return to Meshun, and a stay there for the week, during which the road to Ganaveh was impassable because of the storm. Behind my tent was a little menagerie and aviary. Every morning I was wakened by the quacking of ducks. Sand grouse hopped about, and there were ravens and falcons. A gazelle and two little bears were the special pets of a Qashkuli tot of about seven, who acted as errand boy for the men of the camp. He was an amusing sight in his long, blue coat with brass buttons.

The motor road was impassable, but I galloped over the trails in the district, and glimpsed some of



(Upper) HOME OF ZEENAB, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE MOUNTAINS.

(Lower) THE AUTHOR WITH KHANS OF THE QASHKULI TRIBE.

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the loveliest bits of scenery in all Persia. Glimpsed, too, bits of life that were significant of conditions. Ahead of us, one day, rode a man, alone. His green turban marked him as a *Seyjid* ; his general aspect, a *mullah*. He entered a hut made of brownish reeds and surrounded by wild narcissus.

“ Zeenab lives there,” said the company man who was with me. “ She is said to be the most beautiful girl in the mountains.”

I wished for the impossible ; wished that the lovely Zeenab would come out. That I, like the *mullah*, should enter would not have been permitted on any pretext. No partition shuts off the *anderun* in the small huts. Therefore no stranger, and, above all, no foreigner, may cross the threshold.

We watched the *mullah* come out and ride away. His had no doubt been a begging visit. In a moment a small boy emerged, and, catching sight of us, began to cry. He was afraid, he told Mirza Mahmud, that I would steal his sister, an event of which they lived in constant fear. It had been attempted, though not by Europeans, I was assured. The child was probably the more apprehensive that day because his father was away with a borrowed gun on the trail of a certain Darrashuri tribesman who had stolen ten goats from him the night before.

During that week I visited again the khans in

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the neighbourhood. They welcomed me on second sight as an old friend. My coming, they said, had brought the rain that their crops needed. Their crops and their gardens, too, because the migratory Persians, as much as the settled folk in the cities, love and tend their stretches of flowers.

The news that the road to Ganaveh was again open was not altogether welcome, though the thought of being on my way again was pleasant. But it would have been delightful to have lingered a little longer with the nomads.

CHAPTER VIII

A PERSIAN'S STATEMENT OF PERSIAN GULF CUSTOMS

Sadid himself—The text of the manuscript.

My return to Bushire was like a home-coming, so much had my acquaintance with the city grown during absence. In addition to its importance as a port I now thought of the place as headquarters and metropolis of the district I had just visited. The entire area, I was frequently reminded, was "not Persian, but Persian Gulf; an entirely different thing."

In order to get more light on this interesting district, as well as for the pleasure I found in his society, I made frequent visits to the home of the learned man whom I had met on my first Sunday in Bushire, Mohammed Ali Khan Sadid Kasabi.

Archæologist and historian, his study was a treasure house of fascinating objects and illuminating talk. He showed me a broken vase; one of several he had recently unearthed, and which contained human remains, the bones still intact, in spite of all the centuries that had elapsed since they

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had been so enclosed. Sadid believed that the relics are Farsi, and therefore antedate the Christian era by many generations.

The sitting-room he received me in contained two chairs ; one for the guest and one for himself when he was host to a European. Conscientiously he perched on it throughout my visits ; a small figure, clad in black from boots to skull-cap. His long coat was well buttoned. Only a Persian who has lived in Europe and succumbed to the dress-standards of that lax continent would be guilty of wearing a short coat or jacket, so highly improper are these garments in the frank exposure of the lines of the body.

When no Occidental is present Sadid sits, Persian fashion, on settee or floor, with his legs crossed beneath him. All his work is done on the floor. There he sat during the numberless hours that went into the writing of his book on the history and geography of the Persian Gulf. Every word set down by his own hand in the Persian script was, as truly as any miniature, a work of art and beauty.

Won by my admiration and interest he presented me with a short manuscript dealing with the customs of his people, and when I lamented that I could not read the Persian characters, he straightway set about turning the script into English.



(Upper) A MARRIAGE CARAVAN.

(Lower) MOHAMED ALI KHAN SADDI KASABI WITH VASE-COFFIN.

PERSIAN GULF CUSTOMS

I include here Sadid's translation of his own manuscript into a language that he used but seldom ; the simple formulation of some of the customs that obtain in the Bushire district.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

The people of Bushire consider the age of fourteen as the beginning of manhood. When a boy reaches that age he begins to prepare as much money as will suffice for all his marriage expenses, and he selects a girl by his own free choice as suitable to be his fiancée. Then he informs his parents of his choice, and in case they agree they go to ask the parents of the girl to accept their son as her bridegroom. If the parents of the girl accept the offer, then the young man will frequently call on the girl and begins to serve her father. He sends gifts to her house.

After a lapse of a few days, a dress, a ringlet, and a pair of shoes are sent to the girl. From that day they are considered to be engaged. They use a phrase in this matter which signifies, " Mr. Blank is alert on Mr. Dash's daughter."

After some time—according to the bridegroom's wishes—his relatives go to the girl's home and arrange the celebration of the betrothal. The

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dowry is at that time fixed, and is sent with sweetmeats to her house.

The celebration takes place in the home of the bridegroom. The local sheikh and the bridegroom's friends are invited to attend. The sheikh sends two of his trusted friends to the girl's house to inform her of the celebration. They find her sitting in her bedroom, completely toileted, and surrounded by her friends. They inform the girl that the sheikh was charged to marry her, and they ask her whether she is willing to accept that proposal. This question is repeated four times. Then the girl announces her acceptance by saying "Yes." The trustees then inform the sheikh of her approval, and he unites them to each other by reading a passage from the Koran.

As soon as the word "Yes" is heard from the bride, the house will become full of shouts and applause. The guests then help themselves to sweetmeats and sherbets. They smoke the *kalyans* and disperse.

The sheikh's fee is due to be paid by the bridegroom, who pays it when the marriage contract, signed by the sheikh, is sent to him. The fee will never be less than four krans.

After this celebration the bridegroom frequently calls on the girl, but she hides herself, and he

زندگانی بادیه نشینان بو شهر عروس و داماد

بایات بلوغ راسل چهارده داند پیر چون پسر ایشان به چهارده رسید بدو اوص
مصرفت زفاف را تدارک کرده پیش پسر خود دختری را اشخاب کند و به پدر و مادر
دبزرگان خود گوید چون ابرایشان متفق میشود دختر را نزد پدر یا بزرگان خود
خواستگار شوند چون درجه قبولی یافت دیگر داماد استمرار آید خانه دختر ترزد
و خدمات پدر دختر انجام دهد و تحف دهد ایام خانه دختر فرستد چون چند صبحی
گذرد یکت لباس یک حلقه انگشتری و یک زوج کفش از خانه داماد بجا مانده دختر
برند دوازده روز از مرد مهم محبوب شوند و گویند دختر فلان کوش مهر پسر فلان شده
بعد از چند گاه دیگر یعنی هر موقع داماد خواهد در صدد عقد برآمده بدو اقوام داماد
بجانه دختر آیند و تعیین کاس کنند حاضر و غایب پس از آن کابین حاضر
با شیرینی بجانه دختر فرستند بعد تریتب مجلس در خانه داماد و در منبج
لحظه با دوستان داماد دعوت شوند و شیخ مزبور دو نفر از موثقین خود
بجانه دختر فرستاده در حالیکه دختر ارایش در محله خابش و دوستان
دختر را مومن آن گرفته موثقین وارد شده و قریب دختر نشینند و کات
شیخ و آن بعد عقد را اجازه خوانند و مراسم خود را بجا برآید و اگر کنند
پس با یک نرمی دختر بله گوید و همان بله اجازه شمرده و موثقین برآ

کنند

PERSIAN GULF CUSTOMS

cannot succeed in seeing her. In this way a few months elapse before the marriage celebration takes place.

On that occasion two fine suits of dress, another suit made of prints, and dishes full of sweetmeats, are sent to the bride's house. On the night before the marriage a dish containing the Persian dye henna, also dishes of sweetmeats, carried by someone who is surrounded by a group of shouters, singers, and drummers.

If the bridegroom is a strict Mussulman, the shouts take the form of a praise to Mohammed ; the well-known *Salaamat*—May God praise Mohammed and his family.

This night both the bride and bridegroom are dyed with the henna ; in the early morning they are sent separately to the public baths. If the marriage is in a place where there are no bath-houses, they bathe at home.

Just after noon, the bridegroom mounts a horse and accompanied by several friends he goes to a fountain where he again washes himself, puts on his wedding clothes, and returns to his home, where he takes his seat in his bedroom.

Shouts and hurrahs are heard during the whole time of the procession ; rifles are fired aimlessly for pleasure.

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A dinner is given by the bridegroom in his home just at the night of the wedding. When it has been served the guests leave the bridegroom in his own bedroom and go with plenty of lamps to the bride's house to fetch her.

She is mounted on a horse, surrounded by ladies, and attended by a great populace who shout and cry all the time. When the procession reaches the bridegroom's house, the bridegroom himself comes to the door to receive her, and offers his arm to the bride to alight from the horse.

They enter with a great difficulty owing to the great crowd gathered at the house, wherein one of the relatives of the bridegroom comes and guides her to the bedroom. Then their hands are put together and some prayers are said in their ears. Afterwards their feet are washed with some scent and their thumbs are fastened together. This practice, however, should be performed with great skill, because if the thumb of one of the two stands over the other it is considered a bad omen.

The bridegroom drops some gold coin into the vessel used for washing their feet. So also he gives a gift to the bride as a present for the first time she has uncovered her face. The crowd then go out of the room and leave them alone in the *hajleh*, a room ornamented with different coloured curtains,

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and where swords and shields are put, used as a bedroom for the bride and bridegroom.

CEREMONIES OF BIRTH

When trace of borning appears, the woman is prevented from eating hard and indigestible foods. When seven months pass the nurse orders the necessities of the occasion and they are bought in bazaars. In this month they cut the dresses of the expected infant.

When the time approaches the lady surgeon is summoned. The birth is always a very difficult and troublesome matter. When the lady gives birth they cut the cord by which the infant is attached to the mother, but two inches of the cord are left. The spot is bandaged with a medicine that is a mixture of butter and spices.

The baby is then wrapped in a white cloth and put in a small bed. This bed is laid over a pot which they use to cook their bread. Underneath they put a quantity of rice which will be granted as alms to the beggars on the seventh day after birth. The lady surgeon receives a reward when she cuts the cord.

They wash the baby on the first day if it is summer and on the seventh if otherwise. The

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baby will be put in his cradle after the seventh day. The clothes are so fastened to the cradle that the baby cannot move. The lady will be sent to the bath as soon as the bleeding stops.

The baby is named on the seventh day of his birth, and then the lady surgeon will be dismissed after her fee has been paid.

When the baby begins to walk, small bells are made into an anklet and tied to his feet, so that they make a sound when the baby walks. In case the mother has not sufficient milk, a nurse will be employed who will feed the baby with her milk. This nurse must be of good family and seldom is changed. If she is sent away she will be amply rewarded in addition to her fee.

Several scents are used as oil for rubbing into the body of the baby, so that sun heat may not trouble the skin. They give him some spices, and suppose that they can prevent various diseases. When a baby becomes ill the nurse is prevented from a great many foods, and the parents of the child begin to ask for advice from their neighbours. The parents give all the medicines suggested. The child is sometimes killed by these different medicines and sometimes cured. The usual medicine is the skin of opium seeds and sugar and hot water.

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Those near to Bushire send their babies to be injected with smallpox serum.

When children reach their eighth year they are sent to schools. Half of their time they serve their master in various ways.

At first they are taught to learn the Koran without giving them its meaning. Then various small tales in verse such as "The Story of the Cat and Mouse," "Lady Wasp," and so on. Then the poetical works of Hafiz are to be read. Shah Nemeh is read and learned by those whose fathers might possibly be warriors. In case the father is a preacher, the son is obliged to learn by heart the poetical works of Sjomherri and Mokhtar, which is the tragedy of Hosein. If the father has some poetical interest, the son should also learn Saadi's poetical works. If he has inclination toward history, the son must go over the volumes of Nassekhot-Tamorikh.

Boys who do not show any interest in learning will be sent to shops to be trained in handicrafts like weaving, stone-breaking, artisanship, gardening, earthenware-making, hunting, fishing, robbery, and brigandage. In short, each goes toward the trade of his father.

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HOW THEY TAKE THEIR MEALS

When the morning prayer has been said they breakfast with tea and bread, and then begin to smoke. They use a tobacco known as warm. They sweeten their tea with milk.

Before noon they lunch with bread, dates, and onions, together with three kinds of vegetables known as *kakoll*, *mangack*, and *tooleh*. These vegetables are found in the fields in winter and spring.

They dine at one hour past sunset. The dinner consists of bread, onions, cheese, and sometimes soup also. They eat rice twice in a week. The rice is imported from India.

PASTURES

When the cows are milked they are left to graze in pastures, and to return by themselves to their abodes.

The camels used for carrying the loads are left in special pastures ; and owners carry the loads to the pastures to be put on the camels. Female camels are left under the charge of a camel-driver, who takes them to the pastures. They milk them there.

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Sheep are in care of a shepherd who takes them to the pastures and gives them water by means of taking them near to a water-tank specially built for the purpose. This pond is four yards wide and three-quarters of a yard deep. They are returned to their place just at sunset. They are milked when they arrive. The lambs are separated from their mothers ; they are kept in a separate place attached to that of their mothers but barricaded by thorns.

No fixed pay is ever given to the shepherds, but generally they receive three *tomans* per month. The flock never exceeds four hundred sheep, and is never less than twenty-five.

PLANTINGS

Dates are planted generally in autumn. Water melons are sown just after Nu Ruz. Other melons, cucumbers, and maize are sown in winter. Other vegetables like cabbage and turnips are sown in autumn.

Wheat and barley are planted from the second month of autumn up to the first month of the winter. They plant figs, granades, and vines, but are not familiar with any other fruits.

The man who plants the seeds will also plough

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at the same time. Generally they plough with one horse or donkey, and with two oxen.

Melon plantations are hedged with thorns to protect against animals straying in. They put skulls of animals in the plantations to scare birds.

A small boy is set to watch over the plantations, and they give one hatman of every crop harvested per every acre.

All oaths are uttered upon the name of Hazrat Abbas, son of Ali, and the vows are also made to him. Whenever they succeed in whatever they have undertaken they go to the graves of holy men, taking with them a soup made of wheat. They sometimes kill a goat and distribute its flesh among other persons.

WOMEN'S ORNAMENTS

Armlets made of small coloured balls, and necklaces made of artificial brass coins and sometimes of crystals, are the usual ornaments. Silver armlets are also common.

The best dress consists of long trousers ; underwear of silk ; and an *aba* striped with red lines. No veil or black overcoat is usual in the house.

Some of the women make a hole in the noses of their children and put in rings made of silver.

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They tattoo all their eyebrows ; one pimple on the chin and some on the arms. They make flowers over their heart. These are all green coloured.

MEN'S DRESS

Their shirts are usually short—their collars ornamented—and are always made of muslin. Their underwear is very loose and is either white or black. Robes are dyed in different colours in Bushire, and the men fasten a shawl made of muslin round their waists. They use an *aba* (very thin) in summer and a woollen overcoat in winter.

Every man is likely to possess firearms. And cudgels and swords are sure to be found in the possession of everyone who has no firearms.

CURING OF ANIMALS

Usually sick animals are treated by means of burning their skin. No medicine is known for epidemic diseases. When the hair of animals drops out they are sent to Ahran, a village in Dashti, to bathe in the hot mineral waters.

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SINGERS OF BUSHIRE

There are a group of liberated maid-slaves who are invited to marriage ceremonies. Their only instruments are drums and bells. They sit in a circle and sing. Sometimes they go on tours round the city—to the houses of notables—and receive rewards.

There is also a group of black negroes who have trumpets and drums and who sing in chorus. They sometimes go with the people in the mourning days, and beat their own breasts in a kind of lamentation.

PUBLIC FEASTS

On every holiday those who are acquainted with each other gather somewhere, all dressed in new clothes, and they go to the houses of important people. In these houses tea, coffee, and *kalyans* are served.

CHAPTER IX

THE MOTOR CARAVAN

Real Persia at last—The first caravansary—A night in a merchant's home—Kazarun—Dervishes—Shapur valley.

WHEN the time came to turn my back on Bushire I felt that, at last, I was entering Persia. Syria, Iraq, the Persian Gulf, even the days with the nomads, seemed only a prelude and preparation for the country of caravans, of epic history, of gardens and nightingales.

Before I should reach Shiraz—most Persian of all Persian cities, capital of Fars, most typical of the provinces—I must travel one hundred and eighty miles over one of the hardest roads in Persia. From it I should digress at Kazarun, into the Shapur valley to see the Sassanian ruins.

But before I could take to the road the question of conveyance had to be settled. This was not so easy as might appear. The regular passenger lorries were impracticable because of the amount of my luggage. Private cars were hard to get because it was the season when many pilgrims

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were returning from Najaf and Kerbela. A dozen *hajjis* would crowd into a car, each willing to pay ten *tomans*; thus the car owner received one hundred and twenty *tomans* instead of the seventy customary for the journey. So, naturally, there was little chance for a man to get a car to himself.

My difficulty was solved by a trader who offered to get an automobile for me if I would also carry some goods for his firm. In my travels I have come under suspicion of being engaged in activities that ranged from missionising to rum-selling, so that, in this case, I was delighted to help myself on my way by undertaking a genuine transport job. The business, however, soon threatened to grow out of hand. I found myself agreeing to deliver a few packages for persons other than the trader, and at the last moment, when the car stood in the courtyard of the British Residency waiting for the driver to arrive, an Indian merchant came and offered a tempting sum if I would take a box to Shiraz for him. But the box weighed two hundred pounds, and was of an impossible bulk to accommodate in the crowded car.

I had arranged to start at six, but a departure on scheduled time is, I am convinced, an event that has never yet been achieved anywhere east of Suez.

When at last the driver's hand was on the wheel

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I was astonished to see the owner of the car stow himself in at the back with Safar and the goods. His cool manner of permanency nettled me. In answer to my question through Safar, the man replied that of course he was going too. How otherwise was he to prevent the driver from going on after I had been set down in Shiraz ? The owner always went on these trips. Would he ever see his car again if he did not ? It is hard to understand why, in such circumstances, he did not drive the car himself, and so dispense with the wages of a chauffeur. Perhaps it was a question of losing caste. In any event I saw that whatever I might say would be wasted breath, and the driver showed neither surprise nor offence at his master's words.

When I saw this evidence of the lack of trust Persians place in each other—indeed instances had not been lacking from the very first—I felt that I had been right in not handing over to Safar's charge the bag of currency with which I had provided myself to prevent having to meet the heavy discount required for paper money everywhere except in the largest cities. These silver *krans* and nickel *shahis* would defray the small expenses of the road. To have given it to my personal boy to handle would have been the natural and convenient course, and the one in

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keeping with my custom in other parts of the world. But distrust is contagious, and, in Persia, I administered my own funds. Yet I doubt whether Safar would have taken advantage of the trust. Tricky he was in certain respects, and devious in ways characteristically Persian, but I have no actual reason to believe he would have stolen money.

A mile out of Bushire I looked on the last palms I was to see until I should reach Pahlavi on the Caspian. We were entering the Dasht-i-Lut, the great sand-desert, a fifty-mile stretch that reaches to the foothills. Trackless sand it is, with no wheel-ruts to follow. At the season I speak of it was soggy in places, and the driver criss-crossed to keep in the dry parts.

Caravans travel much of the distance across this desert on a narrow dyke of natural formation, and that which now appeared showed me that I was at last in the Persia of my long expectation. Camels, mules, donkeys, and their drivers ; from ten to a hundred animals in each company, but with so short a distance between that the effect was that of a continuous procession. In the clear air and glaring sunshine the dark moving figures were sharply silhouetted against the sky, and were set into bolder relief through being on the dyke, a



(Upper) OUTSIDE THE FIRST CARAVANSARY.

(Lower) A BATH-HOUSE IN THE DESERT.

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few feet above the level of the desert. From a considerable distance I could see the smoke rising from the *kalyans* at which some of the men puffed.

It was not a dream, not a picture, but a thing of the present, and in which I had a place. Later I would have my own caravan. I would take a part in that slow-moving, endless pageant that has crossed the mountains and the deserts of Iran through the centuries. The whirr of our motor seemed an anachronism. Across the clear air came the tinkle of the camel's bells, and the loud jangle of the larger ones on the donkeys.

I could pick out, in the moving procession of men and animals, the *jalaodar*, the *charvardar*, and the *shotóri*, which is to say, the head man, the muleteer, and the camel-driver. These terms are ignored by most strangers in Persia, who group all under the word *charvardar*, but among Persians the various offices are carefully differentiated.

At the end of the fifty-mile stretch of sand, and just before we began the ascent of the mountains that had loomed ahead ever since we started, we halted for lunch near a caravansary. Of all the crimes of modern journalism in wrenching a word out of its proper signification, none is greater than the treatment of "caravansary" to designate any sort of hotel. The word should be strictly kept

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for the oriental inns : enclosures open to the sky, walled with clay or stone. Sometimes tier on tier of little compartments are built against this wall ; sometimes there is but one story, and that about ten feet high. But the gate of the enclosure is invariably narrow, and is barricaded at night against theft or attack. Then there is never any sound excepting the snores of tired men, and the occasional braying of a mule.

If the caravansary is near a village the chief sometimes assumes a sort of charge, and makes a little money by selling firewood and food to the travellers ; but generally there is no such supervision. And never is there any charge for lodging. These hospitable inns are owned by the Government and are open to all. Some have police guards, who are, on the whole, more of a menace than a protection. Underpaid and hungry, they are naturally more likely to steal from the traveller than to safeguard him from theft. Among the people on caravan there is rarely any trouble. A feeling of comradeship obtains among these hard-working and rough-appearing folk.

This first caravansary of my journey looked hospitable and inviting, but the day was still young so we lingered only for lunch. I ate my sandwich and drank my coffee at the side of the car. Safar,

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the owner, and the driver went to the coffee-shop alongside the road.

There remained sixty miles to cover before we could reach Kazarun. From here the road climbed steadily. It brought us into snow, and to an altitude of five thousand feet, with peaks rising above us yet another thousand. We went through precarious mountain passes, Kutal-i-Malu and Kutal-i-Mamarij ; along precipices and around sharp turns. It was, by long odds, the most nerve-racking road I have ever travelled. No car can make the turns necessary at certain points without being backed, and backing meant going to the very edge of the precipice.

I was glad enough now that the owner of the car had come with us, for at these critical places he would get out and pile a few rocks behind the rear wheels of the car ; but at the time there seemed to be nothing between us and eternity.

The high altitude and steep road checked my impulse to get out and walk. As well die of going over a precipice as of heart failure, so I sat beside the cool-headed driver and ate pistache nuts with an attempt at nonchalance. And I was silenced, if not soothed, by the knowledge that a member of the weaker sex had travelled this road only a short time before—Mrs. Hall and her husband, Major

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Hall, the American Director of Finance of Fars and the Southern Ports. At the Residency pains had been taken to tell me this, no doubt in the realisation that the fact would come to mind at an opportune moment. I mean to compliment Mrs. Hall on her courage when I next meet her. Also I reminded myself how greatly I enjoyed flying over mountains in spite of air-pockets, so that my aversion to these precipices could not have been plain cowardice. But the sudden overtaking of, or meeting with, a caravan at a place so narrow it would have been impossible for two cars to pass I found particularly harrowing.

But the road is meant for caravans, not motor-cars, and, as though to emphasise the fact, at one dangerous bit of the road I saw the wreck of a large car half way down the mountain-side. A little farther along we almost ran into a girl with bundles of firewood on her back, driving a donkey, also heavily laden. The tooting of our horn meant nothing to her. We rounded a turn, and the donkey disappeared over the cliff, where it managed to cling in that miraculous way *burros* can. The girl yelled. She was extremely pretty, with black eyes and hair and glowing skin. With her scarlet scarf, blue blouse, yellow head-dress, and dark skirt, she was more suggestive of Capri than of Persia.

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It was pleasant to see again the unveiled face of a girl, and, too, a girl not wrapped in the eternal black domino of the city women.

Here the scenery was beautiful and varied. There were streams rioting over rocks, or falling in a straight, shining veil far down into green gorges. Lines of jagged peaks hung above and beyond us. Forests of thorn and cyprus trees, alternated with stretches of snow, dazzling in the radiant sunshine. Our *pushteens*—sheepskin coats that come to the heels—guarded us from the cold. At long intervals I saw the ruins of an old fortress, reminders of the greater days of the khans, and rarely were we out of the sound of the bells.

For much of the way—this especially after we had begun the descent—hawks, silver and black-coated, circled about us. Eagles flew above us. I watched them grab the smaller birds by the neck, and with cries that, whatever the intention, served to call other birds to the feast, they began to devour their prey. Birds that shone silver in the sunshiny distance proved on near view to be black. And a near view was easily to be had, for these birds did not fly away until our car was almost upon them.

On this road, as on almost every other in Persia, I was distressed by the sight of the carcasses of

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animals left to the vultures ; beasts of burden that had died on caravan. " Why not bury or burn them ? " I asked.

" Too much trouble. Let the vultures care for them," was always the response. And so the skeletons and carcasses of dead animals litter the roads of Persia. Distressing as is the sight it is less so than that of the sick, lame, and bleeding animals that are kept at work. Even the sound ones are too heavily loaded. There is a law restricting the weight of an animal's load, but, though I saw scales at some of the larger caravansaries, the law is obviously not observed.

At sunset we reached Kazarun, the most important town between Bushire and Shiraz. It lies at the foot of snow-capped mountains, and in the centre of a ten-mile stretch of green valley. Most of its ten thousand inhabitants are small farmers and their families. Kazarun is an oriental, country town, now lapsed again into its birthright of drowsiness after a hectic season of war-time activity, when thousands of men were trained there for the South Persia Rifles.

Narrow, winding streets radiate from the market-square in the centre of the town. On one side is a stone caravansary plus coffee-shop, which is, in itself, an inn of sorts, since wayfarers often spread



(Upper) A PRETTY WOOD CARRIER.

(Lower) A BUTCHER'S SHOP IN KAZARUN BAZAAR.

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their sleeping-rugs between the stone columns supporting the roof. Nearby is the Indo-European telegraph station, an imposing building of two stories. From the square the bazaar-street starts its twisting, turning way, lined with open shops and the dwelling-shacks of the merchants. The minarets of a mosque rise high above the surrounding buildings. Miniature domes set at intervals on some of the flat roofs showed me that these were the baths.

Thus the town spread before me when I sat in the car in front of the coffee-house. A town to be explored ; to begin acquaintance with to-morrow. To-night I wanted rest and sleep.

Bahai friends in Iraq had given me letters to two merchants in Kazarun, but I had no intention of claiming the hospitality of either. The telegraph station promised the most comfort, so that when we were surrounded at the coffee-shop by a crowd that seemed to know the owner of the car, and various sleeping accommodations were urged upon me, I said that I was going there. Safar translated to the interested group, then gave me the news that the telegraph manager was away, and that there was no room at the station. We therefore set out for the home of the town's leading merchant. Until I saw the manager next day I had no idea

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that Safar had lied, that he had arranged matters to his own liking, because the car owner had told him he would be sure to find a congenial group of opium-smokers at the merchant's house.

Out to the edge of the town we drove ; past the Government offices and military headquarters, and, finally, came to the house we sought. The community's richest man proved to be farmer as well as merchant. His home lay at the edge of a citrus grove. The place looked like a small caravansary. I went through a tunnel-like entrance and found myself in an unpaved courtyard, large enough to accommodate a hundred camels, though they would have had to enter single file through the narrow gate. The space was now littered with bales of goods.

Living quarters surrounded the court, but built a few feet above its level. *Anderun* and *berooni* (men's quarters) were on one side ; kitchen, servants' rooms, and offices on another ; a third side had small rooms for clerks ; and the fourth was used for storing merchandise. It was a combination of home, office, and warehouse, interesting to see.

Two young men came from the *berooni* to greet me. When one of them had read my letter of introduction he at once began an outpouring of

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Persian which proved, on Safar's interpretation, to be an offer of unlimited hospitality. The head of the house was absent at the moment, but these young men, one of whom was his cousin, welcomed me in his name. A room would be prepared immediately. I was to consider the house my own.

Servants set about cleaning the room where, when I arrived, the young men had been playing cards with some friends. Safar fixed my cot and wash-basin, and brought my lantern from the car. A costly rug was spread across the table. I was at home.

But my *pro tem.* hosts were curious and greedy for information about me. They hung about the room and kept Safar busy interpreting their questions and my answers, even during my dinner of *kabob pilaf*, which was brought in from the servants' quarters. It was not strange that they asked questions. Their first-hand knowledge of the world reached no farther than Bushire, where each one had been only once. Karachi and Bombay they knew from business correspondence, and their questions had chiefly to do with business conditions. When the real host came, a little later, I found that he, too, was preoccupied with affairs.

Towards midnight I was startled, broad awake. Shouts, the clang of bells, sounds of the shuffling

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of many feet came from the courtyard into which my door had been left open in the interests of fresh air. Safar had cautioned me against this, declaring there was danger of theft, but he had neglected to mention the din attendant upon the arrival of a caravan. This had come, loaded with wheat, from the Qashgai district.

I stood at the door and watched the muleteers and their helpers unload the animals. Each freed beast was, in turn, bidden to go out of the gate. They were simply talked to, and they obeyed as though they had human understanding. Except for me the new arrivals had the place to themselves. No one else had taken the trouble to leave his bed. This was the turning back of the calendar a thousand years to no one but myself.

Even after I had left off watching the picturesque sight, and had returned to my cot, I could not go to sleep because of the talk and shouting in the courtyard. I looked about my room for entertainment. The young men had left a pack of their cards : twenty, made up of five suits ; lions, ladies, an embracing couple, soldiers, a guardsman on horseback. These were not sufficiently like our own playing cards to allow me a game of solitaire in the hope of winning sleep, but I later learned that a game which is essentially poker is played

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with the Persian pack. I found, too, a board for backgammon, the game the Persians were inventing at about the same time that their Indian neighbours were inventing chess, and which is still popular.

The noise in the courtyard at last stopped, and I dropped into sleep. But at daybreak I woke out of a dream in which I had been sleeping in a stable, and I got up and dressed. The courtyard was now as silent as when I arrived, but it was transformed. Piles of wheat-bags reached to the level of my room, and there were hill-high piles of camel droppings. Safar had been right about the wisdom of closing the door, though thieving had not been the danger! I made my way across the court, stumbling over sleeping men, pushed back the heavy wooden bolt of the door, and was outside in the road.

A wan moon was yet in the sky. Just beyond, and seeming much nearer than the mile it really was, the cliff-like mountain touched the dawn-reddened clouds. In the field across the road were camels; I counted fifty, and estimated as many more. Some stood grazing, others lay in the tense posture that makes one wonder whether this beast of burden ever knows what rest is. Young camels were beside their mothers nosing for food.

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Between the recumbent animals I saw heaps of yellow-brown cloth that looked like saddle-pads. A nearer view showed them to be the *charvardars* and the *shotóris*, sleeping under their wool coats beside their good friends the camels. I stepped lightly lest I should waken them, and as I proceeded I made another discovery. In that sleeping company were human mothers with their children ; some were tiny babies. While I watched the scene came to life ; one after another aroused, sat up, and began the day's activity. They poured water over their hands and washed their faces. Camp-fires were lit. They made tea, and bringing great sheets of bread out of their packs, began to eat. The camels lined up as if on parade, seeming to know that another day's march was about to begin. They blinked their melancholy eyes, stretched their long necks as though to relieve an ache, and chewed their cuds.

Because I had no wish to appear a curious alien among these people I moved away, but I was not ready to return to my room. For a mile or more I followed a shepherd taking his flock to pasture. His dog was one of the very few that I had so far seen in Persia.

The sun was high when I returned, and the courtyard scene that I had witnessed in the grey

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dawn was now clear. The wheat-bags were no longer merely wheat-bags. They were things of beauty. Stripes and flower patterns in green and yellow, blue and red, woven into a stout fabric—beautiful enough to be coveted for porch-rugs for the summer homes of the rich. The making of these bags is a localised industry, and are woven at Kasvin in the north.

Immediately after breakfast I set out with Safar to explore the town. We joined a group of men, boys, and girls who had gathered about a dervish in the centre of the market-square. Already dervishes had ceased to be a novelty to me, but they never failed to interest. Within their one common calling of Mohammedan friarship, with its obligation to enter all mosques and chant and weep in praise and mourning for the saints and martyrs of their faith, they are men of varied avocations. Some begged of me, offering nothing in return but their piety ; others clowned, or told the endless stories of the East.

Scheherezade may well have learned many of her tales from a dervish. Some are poets. Some carry a harp or lute on their wanderings. I found some of these men to be dirty, some clean ; their dress ranged from rags to neat brown *abas* ; their head-covering from scarves and *kholas* to the green

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turban of the *Seyjid*. One of these dervishes wore a bracelet, and his left arm was tattooed with a camel, a girl, a prince, a gazelle, and a mountain. It pictured some legend ; one that I might have heard if I had known Persian, and had had a week to spare in letting him walk alongside me and talk.

The man in the square at Kazarun squatted on the ground and wrote with a reed pen on a long strip of paper. Beside him lay a pile of such papers ready for use. Under his arm was a *kalandoon* (ink horn), the badge of the genuine *mirza*. From right to left of the paper his hand travelled, making the characters of the beautiful Persian script. Each member of the group gazed at him with the concentration of a speculator watching the tape come out of the ticker. Obviously momentous things depended on the writing set down by a ragged dervish in the Kazarun market-place.

"What are you writing ?" I asked.

He paid no attention until he had finished the script. Then he turned to Safar.

"Your master should not have spoken," he said. "He almost broke the spell. I was writing for the girl who stands beside you. She wishes to become a mother."

He now handed the paper to the girl. She gazed reverentially at that panacea for her trouble, the

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cure for her barrenness ; then she folded it and tucked it somewhere inside her dress. Another suppliant came. He wished—Safar translated for me—to be healed of an infirmity. The dervish at once set to work on another strip of paper. If I had felt an inclination to smile at the pious brother's profession I should have been checked by the recollection of the healing mental sciences that flourish in the Western world ; and of Coué, Lourdes, and all the other miracle-working shrines.

The faith of these simple folk in the market-place was of a piece with that of the rest of the world, and who shall estimate what healing may be wrought because of faith ?

There were many shoemakers in the bazaar. Kazarun shoes, like those of Abadeh, are famous throughout Persia. Made of twilled, white canvas, ornamented and strengthened by a strip of leather up the back, and with flat, heelless soles, I doubt whether more comfortable footwear was ever conceived. I wanted to buy several pairs for my myself, and for gifts, but considered waiting until I should reach Abadeh as a more convenient purchasing place, since it was farther along the way. Safar's insistence that I should buy at Kazarun was due to the fact that he had made

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friends with a shoemaker at his opium party the night before.

From the cobblers I went into saddlery shops. While the pride in handsome harness and bags did not appear to be so strong as Hajji Baba had led me to expect, there is obviously a love of artistic carving, of glittering nails, and of silver and gold ornaments.

Even the butchers' shops in the Kazarun bazaar had charm for me. Fountains trickled over the carcasses of sheep and goats, hung under a bower of green branches. Veiled housewives came and made their choice of cuts after much deliberation, and yet more haggling about price.

In this town I first enjoyed the comfort and luxury of the public baths. The steam-bath is one of Persia's many gifts to the Western world, and I found the equipment inside the clay houses not different in essentials from that of the Turkish baths in Western cities. Of course one stepped on camel's hair rugs instead of on tiled floors. The company in the steam-room was varied ; no distinction there of caste. Muleteers had shed their rags of the road and were side by side with wealthy merchants ; they also slapped one another on the back in a sort of mutual massage. My back received one or two vigorous slaps—I think by

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mistake, so I felt no obligation to return the office in kind.

These baths, together with two towels, cost only one *kran*, which is the equivalent of ten cents. They are a comfort beyond any telling to the men on caravan, begrimed with sweat and dirt from the long, hot days on the road. A camel-driver does not have his bath every day, nor perhaps every week. But wherever there is water enough, or thermal activity, there will be found a public bath, and he avails himself of it.

I then left Kazarun by motor to go to the Shapur valley, with its tablets and inscriptions commemorating the prowess of the first Shapur. There were few signs of human life in the eight miles that brought me to the end of the Kazarun valley ; fewer still after we had turned into the Shapur. The road ended abruptly, but we drove on a grassy trail for about two hours before we reached the height where Qalah Khan, mounted and with half a dozen horses, waited. Word had been sent by my Kazarun host to this khan of the Qalah-i-Hatum Bashi village to be on the look-out for me.

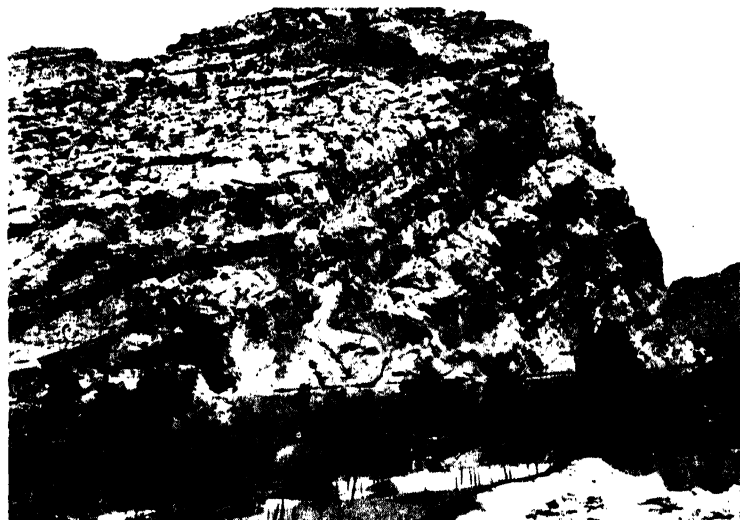
Fine looking and smartly dressed, the young khan had proved his hospitality by bringing for me an even better mount than his own, if I may

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judge by its skill in crossing the rapids of the Shapur river. Fording, and that possible only in a few places, is the sole means of getting across. When my horse was floundering in the water I wished that Sir Hormuz's bridge had been an achievement and not merely a dream. That most prominent Parsee of to-day planned a bridge across the Shapur, and also to build a funicular railway up the mountain-side to the ruins of Shapur's ancient city, but the project had to be abandoned. No animals were strong enough to carry the heavier parts of the necessary structure.

Here on Parsee ground I wondered how followers of the ancient faith fared in modern Persia. Was there bitter intolerance between those who took Mohammed's way through the world and those who took Zoroaster's? "Formerly, yes," Qalah said, "but not now. Always the Arabs have tried to stir up trouble, but for the last two years they have not succeeded well. Since Reza Khan came into power there has been a better feeling."

On the rocky walls of the deep, narrow ravine of the Shapur river are the sculptures, that have proved monuments more enduring than masonry, to the memory of the warrior and builder, Shapur I, the second king of the Sassanian line. Nothing but ruins is the city that he built high on the cliff



(Upper) ENTRANCE TO SHAPUR VALLEY.
(Lower) IN THE SHAPUR VALLEY.

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above the citadel Kaleh-i-Dokhtar (Fortress of the Maiden) which guarded the entrance to the ravine.

Shushtar, which he founded or restored, has had a somewhat kinder fate, though it, too, has known havoc. But the tablets in the rocks have endured for seventeen centuries in spite of the wear of time and weather, and the coming of destroying enemies.

We rode past the fortress-rock and soon arrived at the first of the two tablets on the left bank of the river. A kneeling figure in a Roman tunic clasps the knees of the horse on which Shapur sits—the Sassanian king and the humbled Valerian, Emperor of Rome, chiselled in rock to be seen through the generations. The second tablet, which is made up of several small panels, again shows Shapur mounted, and a kneeling Roman. Archæologists believe that the third figure, which has fettered ankles, but laurel-crowned and led by the king, represents Cyriades the Syrian, whom Shapur made the successor of Valerian.

The four tablets on the other side of the river are difficult of access. They are not so well preserved as those on the left bank, and were probably not such good work when carved. Three of the four appear to belong to a period much later than that of the first Shapur. They depict the pageant of Persian conquest. There are captives

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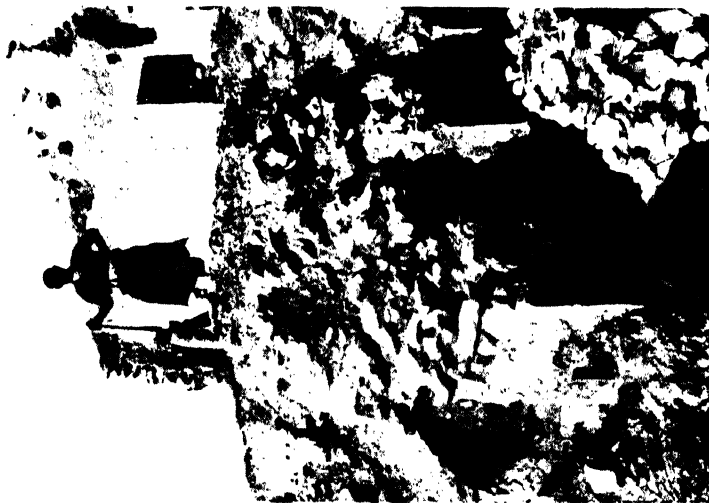
and courtiers ; kings on horseback ; a boy riding an elephant. The sixth tablet goes back to the time of the first Shapur, and is again a scene of the triumph over Valerian—a tale the proud Sassanian could not tell too often.

It was pleasant to come to the village of Tank Tange Choga and turn my thoughts from the memorials of dead kings to the daily life of present-day people. Outside some of the huts women were grinding into flour acorns gathered in the nearby forests. There were fields of barley and great stretches of poppies, beautiful in their flower and rich in promise of opium.

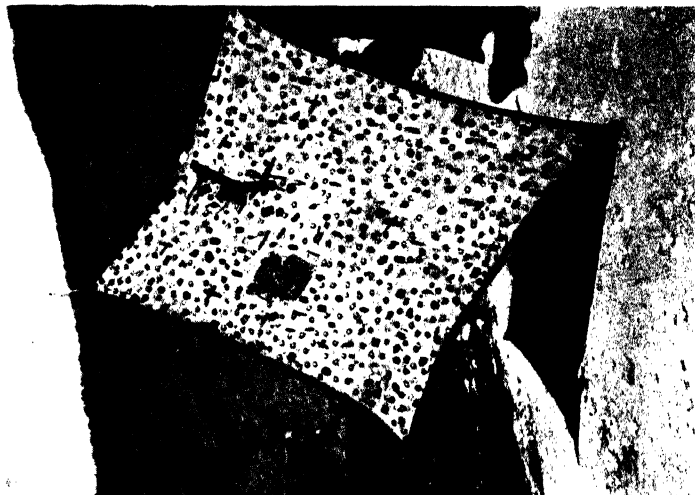
At this village we left our horses and started on foot up the trail that leads to the cave and statue of Shapur, midway up a high, rocky cliff. The trail is so steep that from below it appears to be sheer rock with almost no footholds. I observed that the men had ropes and asked the reason.

“ To haul you up,” Qalah said. “ You could not make the climb.”

Nor, I must confess to my humiliation, was I even hauled up. When we reached the base of the cliff Safar broke into violent protests and warning. His agile imagination supplied innumerable dangers, the least of which was that I should be broken to bits. I told myself that he was only afraid that



QALAH KHAN, SHAPUR VALLEY.



DAIFAIK, A HUNTING SHIELD TO TEMPT
BIRDS.

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something would happen, and that his job would be at an end, but whether his panic was due to love of me or love of his job it was convincing.

Half way up the climb I told him to be still. I would turn back. There is no use crying over spilt milk, nor yet over milk one might have drunk and did not. That climb to Shapur's cave and the sight of his monument will always stand for me as an achievement that would have been mine for the mere doing. The mountain-top on which Shapur's city had stood seemed to be gilded with a special radiance. I remembered the legend that he had chosen that site because the sun appears to rise from behind it.

Back again across the river we halted to reach the lunch Qalah had brought. There, close to the tablet commemorating the fact that Shapur had brought Valerian to his knees, we sat and ate cold quail. And I wondered whether it would be possible—Persian etiquette being what it is—to try to negotiate a means of getting some of the edibles back to Kazarun with me.

Safar said it could not be done. He pointed out the bad taste of such a request. I admitted there was no question about that, but I wanted the quail so much that I told him to repeat our conversation to Qalah, but to end by saying that, of course, the

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Sahib had decided that it would be impossible to ask for the quail. Thereupon Qalah had two quails wrapped and presented them to me with much ceremony.

I had no compunction about taking them after I had watched a hunter with a *daifaik*, and had seen how easily quails are come by in the Shapur valley. The *daifaik* is a kite-like device made of canvas to which is fastened bits of coloured rag, and which serves as a shield for the hunter ; a shield with a hole for the barrel of his gun. When the hunter sees game he sets the *daifaik* slantwise or holds it above his head. The coloured rags flutter in the wind, giving the effect of a flowery field. The birds fly towards the *daifaik* and the hunter need only pull the trigger. That day, in Shapur, I saw one man bag twenty birds in an hour—rare luck for a whole day's effort at quail-shooting by any other means.

Next morning we left Kazarun for Shiraz. We did not tarry to enjoy the sights of the road, nor the villages along the way. Yet certain pictures of that day are vivid in my memory, particularly several caravans close to a public bath on the mountain-side at Dashtarjeen. A woman travelling in a hammock slung between two donkeys. An entire family journeying forth into the world, seated on



(Upper) WAYSIDE SMOKERS OF KALYAN AND OPIUM.
(Lower) PERSIAN SHEPHERDS.

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what looked to be a garden bench securely fastened to the back of the mule. Somewhere along the way I was first struck by the fact that not all the smoking done outdoors was done from *kalyans*. Many indulged in opium. No need to go within walls. It was done frankly and openly, for it was a custom of the country.

We spun past the caravansary at Khan-i-Zinian, and, with another six *farsakhs*, had reached Chanar Rahdar. This walled village, with its fifty huts, seemed a large settlement after the tiny ones we had passed. Two *farsakhs* more brought us to Shiraz. And, for almost the whole distance since leaving Kazarun, blue birds had flown before us like a vanguard into the city of the poets.

CHAPTER X

SHIRAZ

The over-sung city—The bazaar—Sheikh Abdul Kerim Sadat—Hafiz and Saadi and their tombs — The Ghevam-ul-Mulk — Mediæval punishment tour—Birthday dinner with the Dekkan family.

THE passport formalities outside the gate were quickly over and I was in Shiraz with its fifty thousand people (of whom not more than fifty are Europeans), its mile-high altitude, and its clear, sparkling mountain air. Shiraz, the city of every Persian's eternal devotion, because it was the birthplace of Hafiz and Saadi.

Let me admit at once that my first glimpse brought acute disappointment. The city seemed to me to have been over-praised, and its beauty over-stated. However little one may be versed in the Persian poets, no one ever came to Shiraz without having heard that it is the city which turns the heart of the traveller even away from his native land. Roses, nightingales, and bulbuls ; one has heard so much about them that one entertains a feeling almost of resentment that they are not met with at the city gates. No Garden that

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Displays the World was then, or later, revealed to my tired eyes. I saw nothing which could justly be called the Envy of Heaven. And yet that oriental city, with its blue domes and shining minarets rising above the low, flat roofs, and the background of high mountains, with yellow sand-hills in the middle distance, really is beautiful.

Whoever comes to Shiraz must cross mountain and desert, and in such circumstances roses do look supernaturally large and colourful, and their odour smells sweet beyond any prose-telling. Moreover the poets, returning wearily from the desert, were at home, and were straightway welcomed into one of the gardens. During those first hours in Shiraz the only suggestions I had of gardens were the lines of dark cypresses rising above high walls.

Entering from the west I found myself in the Bagh-i-Shah Road, with a line of neglected trees down its centre. I drove at once to the hotel. It was clean, but small, and its three guest-rooms were overflowing. But Major Hall, the American Manager of Finance for the South, hospitably welcomed me at his home in the suburbs of the city, but he already had two of his countrymen for guests. So I made my way to the British Residency on the Bagh-i-Shah Road, and presented a letter of introduction to the manager of the

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telegraph station, which is a part of the Residency compound. The Residency itself, a long, low, white building with a garden, is separated from the telegraph station by a lane. Just beyond the building flying the Union Jack is one from which flutters the red flag of Soviet Russia. When, in the mornings, I left my pleasant, book-lined room at the telegraph station to walk the half mile to the centre of the town, I always passed the two tall Sowars who stood guard at the British gate, and the two Cossacks at the Russian.

Exploring the city I came to love it, and fell under its unescapable charm. I had brought half a dozen letters from Shirazi I had met elsewhere to Shirazi here at home. Some of these people I found and some I did not, but the looking for them made me acquainted with the city.

Walls twelve feet high stand between the gardens and the narrow winding alleys that serve for streets. A heavy wooden gate with a knocker of iron or silver, beautifully wrought, gives entrance to these legendary paradises, which, far more than the houses, are the true homes of their owners. The quarters of the poorer folk are more open to the world. The merchants live at the back of the shops in the bazaar-lanes, and much of the family life is passed in the street. In the dusk of the

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evenings I joined the promenaders in Bagh-i-Shah Road, keeping carefully to the side where the black-coated men walked slowly, but sending many a glance across the way where black-clothed women were also making an evening promenade. This segregation of the sexes, to which an Occidental never grows accustomed, is like a procession of monks and nuns.

These were the Persians of the old miniatures ; graceful, aristocratic, typically racial in aspect, manner, and movement. After I had visited Isfahan and Teheran I understood what had been meant when Shiraz was spoken of as the most Persian of all cities. Lying in the middle of the province of Fars, cut off by high mountains from the alien influences that have changed the manners and the people of the Gulf district ; cut off, again, by high mountains and by a greater distance from the world that has pushed in from the north, Shiraz is still Persia unalloyed.

The country round about the city shows Fars to be a land of plenty ; sufficient to itself. Dark grapes and cherries, all the fruits of a temperate climate, grow there ; so, too, do the mangoes of the tropics. The fertile ground needs only to be scratched ; one pound of grain yields a harvest of a hundred pounds. What need, the people ask,

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of modern agricultural machinery? The old donkey plough is still in use.

Shiraz has always been famed for the excellence of its silver workmanship. Most of its ancient treasures have found their way into museums and private collections. Now, as in India and Burmah, a price fixed by the weight is the first cost of a silver article, then one bargains for the amount to be paid for workmanship. Safar's skill in these matters being greater than my own, I told him to be on the look-out for interesting pieces. His best find was an old powder-bag covered with leather, hard as a rock and almost black. It was shaped like a sheep's heart. After much oiling and scraping Safar brought the carving to light: men on horseback. We found, too, a silver platter, Shiraz work of about fifty years ago. Here the carvings were of horses and their riders going to battle. Modern work, but potent to take the imagination back to the time when Tamerlane's and other hordes swept over Iran.

The bazaar, roofed over but airy, with its clusters of shops of like wares, is much larger than is needed for present-day Shiraz. It was built during the city's greatest day, when, in the eighteenth century, Kerim Khan made it his capital. He had come as a viceroy of the Shah-in-Shah, but was, in

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reality, the sovereign of the south, and there he founded the Zend dynasty. He built, and expanded, and made the city splendid. Whatever grandeur still exists in Shiraz is the work of his time; work that survived the destruction and removals of the jealous Kadjar when he came into power and moved the capital to Teheran, and the yet more terrible earthquake devastation in the middle of the nineteenth century.

One legend of the city's beginning traces its way back to the great-grandson of Noah. Another dates its origin from the seventh century after Christ. But it is undoubtedly much older than that. Archæologists find evidences of a city existing on this site during the Achæmenian and Sassanian dynasties. There are records of a fascinating history when men of the people forged their way into power, and of a line of Turcomans who ruled, but left more of tradition than of trace in the modern city.

Something of this history was on the tongue of my friend, Sheikh Abdul Kerim Sadat, whilst we went together about the city. He, a native Shirazi, was in Persian dress. The gold embroidery on his turban showed his station, the son of a Mujtahid. I had brought a letter to him from Najaf, where, for ten years, he had lived, teaching

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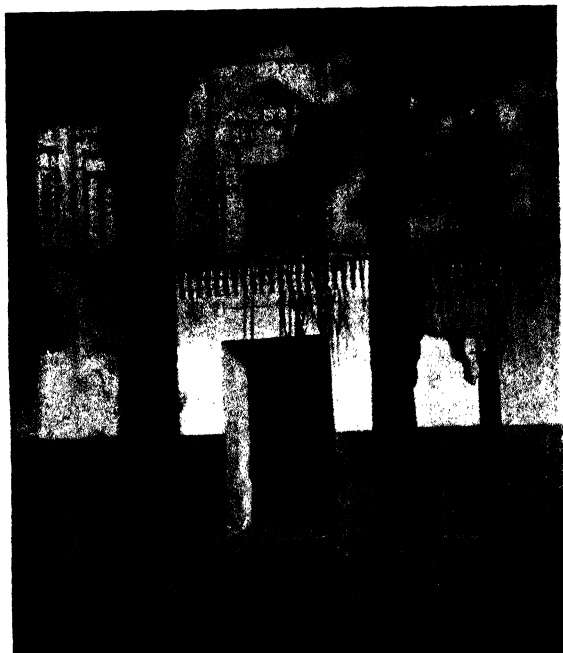
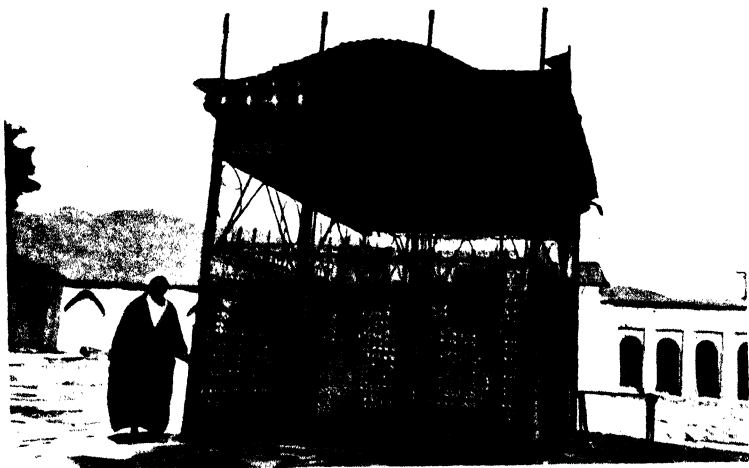
mathematics, astronomy, and geography in the university.

Chief among the sights the sheikh was eager to show me were the tombs of Hafiz and Saadi. While we walked through the narrow streets, and outside the city to the cemetery where Hafiz lies, the sheikh talked about the poets who have been beloved by the Persians for six centuries.

“Hafiz was of the fourteenth century ; a hundred years later than Saadi,” he said. “Shazedin was the name to which he was born, but he was called Hafiz by the people because the word means ‘By mind he can read ; by mind he can do anything without looking at anything.’” Somewhat abstruse, but a high compliment to the poet’s powers of imagination and perception.

In his attempted analysis of his city’s great men the sheikh laboured with a tongue with which he was unfamiliar ; his English is only fairly good. “Best loved of all the Persian poets are Saadi and Hafiz,” he said. “Hafiz is famous for praying. Saadi had a more poetical education. He described human nature. His poems are full of the joy of life. There is also Firdusi, who, too, is very great. Firdusi was the poet of ancient history, and his poems are long.”

What rhapsodies of praise the sheikh would have



(Upper) TOMB OF HAFIZ.

(Lower) THE REPUTED PORTRAIT OF HAFIZ IN HAFTAN'S TOMB.

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poured forth had I been able to understand Persian, I shall never know, but I doubt whether he could have done better than by that brief exposition of the lyric piety of Hafiz ; the rich epigrams and verse of Saadi ; and the epics of Firdusi, the author of *Shah Nanjeh*, *Book of Kings*.

Of Omar Khayyam, who, though born in Khorasan, lived and wrote for many years in Shiraz, one hears nothing in this shrine-city of the poets, nor anywhere else in Persia. Omar was hated by the clergy, whose practices he attacked and ridiculed. Astronomer and mathematician his countrymen rate him, but his verse is not for them. One therefore wonders how much of the "Rubàiyat" is Fitzgerald's, how much Omar? In Persia one certainly comes to the realisation that for all his recording of his philosophy of life, the tent-maker poet would have been allowed to pass forgotten into "yesterday's seven thousand years" if the genius of that nineteenth-century Englishman had not recognised and supplemented him and carried his message to alien eyes.

The cemetery where Hafiz lies is on the outskirts of the city, and is filled with the bodies of the faithful who did not reach Najaf, Kerbela, Kum, or Meshed. We walked among the neglected graves and came to the high, spiked iron railing that sets

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apart the ground made sacred by the poet's dust. A marble slab is inscribed with his name and some of his verses ; a needed assurance, for no pilgrim would expect to find the tomb of a loved poet inside that forbidding cage. But it is not forbidding to the Shirazi. On Friday nights they picnic close to this enclosure, in the sandhills near a cypress grove.

Saadi's tomb lies somewhat farther from the city, on a hillside, and is within a mausoleum. A lighted lamp burns above it. At rest here in this solemn place is the man who was full of the joy of life ; writer of witty epigrams, and who wandered over the world during much of his long life. Saadi lived one hundred and ten years—lunar years, but still a great age, since between the two calendars is only the difference of one year in thirty-three. No more than Hafiz's grave is Saadi's given over merely to memorial visits. Here a *mullah*, standing in front of the engraved slab, reads from the Koran. And outside the enclosure one sees a school of little boys squatting on the ground and chanting their Koran, their poets, and all the things that they must learn from books.

Having completed our pilgrimage to the shrines of the great dead, the sheikh led me to the home of the prominent living. Beyond Saadi's tomb, but farther into the sandhills, we came to a high wall

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surrounding a villa which had been visible for a considerable distance. The sheikh took a key from the folds of his brown *aba* and unlocked the gate, remarking, " This is one of the homes of my friend and great benefactor, the Ghevam-ul-Mulk. I teach some of his children." He had brought me to the country villa of the former Prime Minister of Fars.

I was at last within the enclosure of a Persian garden. Fountains, jetted streams that shone and sparkled in the sunlight, and the channels that carried the water away were tiled with brilliant blue faience. There were lines of black cypresses and poplars ; willows and elms and sycamores. There were orange trees and beds of flowers. Nothing was wanting but the nightingales and bulbuls to make of it the garden of the poet's praises.

" ' Bagh Dil Gosha ' the place is called," the sheikh said. Then he fumbled for English. " It signifies whatever broadens the mind or opens the heart." Bagh Dil Gosha, Garden of Heart's Desire.

The beautiful place is well protected. Besides the high walls is a watch tower on the nearby hill. Guards are always stationed there. It is claimed that the Ghevam-ul-Mulk was the only overlord in Persia permitted to keep his rifles when the great

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order for disarmament was issued. Reza's treasury is not rich enough to equip an army to keep order in the districts owned and governed by the Ghevam's family. The Ghevam himself has jurisdiction over about twenty-five thousand. He is the fifth of his family to head the Khanseh nation, which is half Arabic, half Persian. Deputy to the *Medjlis* in Teheran, and a close friend of Reza's, naturally the Ghevam's influence reaches far beyond his realm. More than once I heard it whispered that he could have been the shah if he had chosen.

I had brought a letter of introduction to him, but I was glad it so fell out that I was introduced by the sheikh who was the teacher of his children. This introduction took place at the Ghevam-ul-Mulk's town house, which, like the country villa, was a palace within a park.

When we entered the garden I saw men standing about in groups, talking and waiting for their lord to appear. They were small landowners, and vassals of the Ghevam. The great man was about to hold his morning levee.

The sheikh and I had passed these groups and reached the verandah steps when the Ghevam appeared. A man about forty, a black *aba* over his European clothes, and wearing a black fez without a tassel, he looked the person that he is—

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a Persian, educated and progressive, reaching out for modern and Western ways without sacrificing his own rich heritage.

His wife is the only Persian lady who visits European ladies ; this, of course, only when no Persians are present. She even removes her veil during these visits. She is the only Persian lady who travels openly with her husband, riding in the same car with him on his journeys to Teheran.

After the sheikh had spoken the words of introduction—his obsequious manner was eloquent of the Ghevam-ul-Mulk's standing—we walked in the garden and talked, whilst tea was brought again and again in a gracious prolongation of the audience.

The Ghevam-ul-Mulk has had much to do with Europeans. His two sons are at the American college in Beirut and will later go to Oxford. He himself has never been to England. "Too busy. I cannot leave my country." One hears this often from the important men in Persia, and one comes to realise that the languor and idleness of the East is largely a myth nowadays.

The Ghevam's dress, European and Persian, is a symbol not of his mind but of his methods. He has appointed a British expert to try and devise a means of diversifying his crop, and improving his

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vast land. But in matters where he considers it wise he holds to the systems of his ancestors. " Tribes in my territory cannot be governed on an Oxford basis," he told me. " Too much of the old highwayman spirit is left in Persia for us yet to drop the old manner of coping with it. I have all that I can do to keep the roads safe. Robbers are continually after the opium and the currency carried by the caravans."

I learned that the Ghevam-ul-Mulk makes an annual tour of his realm for the double purpose of inspection and punishment. Several days before he arrives in any town his visit is announced by heralds riding through the streets and crying that the chief is on the way, and that thieves and other culprits will now be dealt with.

The Ghevam-ul-Mulk follows in state with the executioner, red clad and with the instruments necessary for crucifying and whipping tied on his mule. This mediæval pageant of horror is not an anachronism in present-day Persia. The Ghevam believes that the cutting off of a hand is a more effectual punishment than hanging for the discouragement of evil-doers. An instance was cited. A boy had been thrown into a well. The guilty persons had been ordered to be hanged by the local *ketkhoda* (mayor). When the Ghevam-ul-Mulk



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came he censured the *ketkhoda*. A man hanged is a man hanged ; he is dead and soon forgotten, but a man walking about the village with his hands cut off is a continual reminder of what may happen to one guilty of crime.

On these tours of his district the Ghevam-ul-Mulk takes four hundred armed soldiers. Unfortunately the tour was over for that year, and I could not accept his invitation to ride with him at a later date.

The gallows in Shiraz stands in a large public square. No execution happened during my stay, though they are said to be of frequent occurrence, always with the public in attendance, and with bands playing.

The nonchalant attitude of Persians toward the carrying-out of the death penalty is no new thing. To instance this quality the English tell a story which is probably much more of a parable than a fact. One of the shahs, on a visit to London, became so deeply interested in the historic execution-block in the Tower that he asked to see it in use. When he was told, as tactfully as possible, that the laws of the country did not permit specimen executions, he immediately offered one of his own retainers. The embarrassed officials had some difficulty in explaining that they might not use

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block and axe even on one of the shah's subjects merely to show how they used to work in the old days.

Certainly, in spite of the gentleness and kindness of the individual Persian, it is a land of punishments that seem incredibly cruel in a twentieth-century world. Sometimes capital punishment is administered by cutting the throat. Again a culprit is sometimes shot from the muzzle of a cannon. Others are buried, but with their heads left above the ground for a period varying with the importance of the crime ; it may be days or weeks. For the offence of selling bad bread a baker may be stood against a tree and his ear be nailed to it. There is, I was told by the Persian lawyer I met in Basrah, a diversity of punishments for the same crime. The local laws of the various cities play a part in this ; so does the discretion of the executive. As in Persia so in every other place, the luck of the offender depends on the skill of his advocate.

Had I come from the north I should probably have brought a letter to the Governor of Shiraz, the appointee of Reza Shah, but I did not regret the glimpse of officialdom I missed by having entered the city from the west. The homes of various sorts of people were open to me, and from them I gleaned my impressions of life in present-day Shiraz.

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The Dekkan family welcomed me. Months before, in Bagdad, I had met one of its members, Dekkan Bahadur Abdul Hussein, the second name proclaiming his descent from one of the field-m Marshals of Dschengis Khan, the Mongol conqueror. The feudal lands of the Dekkan family do not stretch so far as do those of their ally, the Ghevam-ul-Mulk, nor their other allies, the Bakhtiari, but they are stupendously wide reaches. Into the courtyard of their great house in Shiraz come caravans bringing the produce of the lands ; thousands of bags of wheat, and poppy seeds to be made into the precious opium.

Though Persian in its external aspect the Dekkan home is European in furnishing and decoration. Six brothers and one uncle were present during my first visit, and I found them to be men of the wide world. It was a polyglot gathering ; each of the brothers had been educated in a different European country, therefore each spoke at least one Occidental language in addition to Persian, Turkish, and Arabian. A cousin from Teheran also dropped in ; he seemed provincial in that many-tongued assembly, for he spoke only Russian besides his native Persian.

These gentlemen arranged a dinner-party for me. " May you live to be a hundred and twenty years

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old " was their toast, drunk in Shiraz wine, the famous *chollar*, made of dark red grapes, and the ancestor of sherry that came to the Western world by way of Spain. It seemed too lavish a gift of years, but they told me such ages were not uncommon in Persia, also that it was not unusual for a man to become a father at a hundred, and then live for another fifty years. All wore European dress, and only the silver and gold sprinkling-pot for the hands, instead of finger-bowls, was Persian among the appointments of the table.

Certain other personal encounters may not pass unrecorded since they not only gave pleasantness to the days in Shiraz ; for they were with types in this most Persian of cities. One was with an old man at the Imperial Bank of Persia, and housed within the bazaar. He came into the room where I was talking with the English manager, bringing some bags of currency that I had bought. " You can speak English to Mirza Mahmud," the manager said. " He was in the States years ago."

I found him eager to give reminiscences of the America of forty years ago he had known and loved. He had been the secretary to the first Persian legation at Washington. " It was in Mr. Cleveland's time ; soon after the first turquoise merchant went to America—the first man to go from here to

SHIRAZ

your land. Perhaps the reports sent back had something to do with the shah sending us. I do not know. I came to know both President and Mrs. Cleveland ; there were never kinder people. In those days we wore our *kholas* and *abas* wherever we were, and they made a sensation in the streets."

His account gave a picture of the lonely young Persian, so much more alien in an America of the 'eighties and 'nineties than he would be to-day. It brought a realisation, too, of the leaven of understanding in a country made by returned travellers.

Another was an Anglo-Indian who had spent fifty of his seventy-two years as a trader in Shiraz. A simple-minded, delightful man, whom one loved on sight. His wife, a Swedish woman, has long been dead. His only child had recently followed a call into the missionary field, leaving behind her much handiwork and many photographs to keep her father reminded of her. But if he is lonely in his great house, office, and courtyard he says nothing about it. Two boy attendants look to his material needs.

Every dinner-party welcomes him as a guest. All day he is busy at his desk ; and his house contains many treasures of Persian art, carved silver, swords, and rugs. A beautifully illuminated

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copy of the Koran, more than a hundred years old, is his chief treasure. *Mullahs* have tried to get this gem of workmanship out of the hands of an unbeliever. "Once my house was broken into," he said. "But, of course, that could not have been a *mullah*."

But the type most significant of modern Persia was Colonel Abdullah; twenty-eight years old, more than six feet tall, clean shaven, blond and ruddy. Our acquaintance began at my birthday dinner at the Dekkans', and was continued at tea in his quarters. He was an ardent patriot—a soldier since he was sixteen—and had been fighting for twelve years. When I, in admiration of his mind, strength, and charm, said that he would make an ideal military attaché, he protested his unwillingness. "Let older men take on such service. For me there is too much to do in Persia." And he told me he had fought against the Bolsheviks until he had been taken prisoner at Resht, and was later in British service against the Kurdish tribes around Lake Ourmiah. He has helped to put down every uprising in his country since that time.

My comment to this young patriot on the thieving, underpaid soldiery I had seen in the south was answered with hot enthusiasm.

SHIRAZ

“ All that does not matter. It will be set right. Nor does the money to carry on with matter. Any soldier who complains is disloyal to Reza Shah. We must prove to the world what we can do. Slow work. A terrible task. But Reza Shah is getting the army into condition. He is weeding out the peasantry, and the idlers who were made officers during the stress of war. We must have officers of high class who will help Reza uphold the integrity of Persia.” He rose, clicked his heels together, and stood straight, a symbol of the military party in Persia. He was Young Persia ; Reza Shah’s hope and strength.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAST CARAVAN

The *charvardar* and his helpers—Dil Gosha—Road guards—Zarghun—
The stolen cook-book—The richest man of Kinareh—Persepolis.

FROM Shiraz to Isfahan was the stretch of Persia that now lay before me. From the City of Roses, sung by poets who were too lavish of praise, to the city of Hajji Baba; three hundred miles through valleys, across plateaux, into high mountainous regions, and through snowy passes bearing names as sinister as “ Old Women’s Graves ” and the “ Pass of Wild Men and Women.” Dependent on mud villages for my nights’ lodgings, I was to travel the road worn by the feet of men, camels, horses, and donkeys for hundreds of years; even before the great Alexander passed that way.

Then came one of the annoyances of preparation. During the days I went about Shiraz getting ready for my caravan everyone to whom I mentioned the project said that whilst, of course, I must make the journey, equally, of course, I must make it by motor. Didn’t I know in what century I was living? Animal caravans were still used for the

THE LAST CARAVAN

transport of goods, and by travellers who could not afford to shun the slowness and the hardships of that antiquated mode of travel. All others went by car. And even if my journey were possible in the summer it was out of the question in the winter as I now planned it.

But I was determined that, even though mine should be the last animal caravan, I would make the journey in that manner. Wisely determined, I still believe, in spite of the temporary disaster to health wrought by the cold and the food. With me, in any case, will always remain the memories of contact with certain phases of Persian life I could not even have glimpsed in rapid transit. Those days and nights between Shiraz and Isfahan I consider the most significant and interesting part of my Persian journey, for, in them, more than at any other time, I had the opportunity to observe and to share the life of the people.

I wanted a camel caravan, but since one camel could have carried me and all my outfit I compromised on horses, mules, and donkeys. My mount was a grey stallion, beautiful and spirited, who had no faith that the heart-shaped amulet hanging from his neck would protect him from the rocks by the roadside. I named him Dil Gosha—Heart's Desire. And for this treasure I only paid

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sixty *tomans*. Another horse, a common *yuba*, I bought for Safar, who would have charge of the other men on caravan, in addition to his personal service to me. I also hired a man named Gholam to act as *charvardar*. His nephew, Hassan, a boy in his early teens, began his career as groom on this expedition.

What name my muleteer had been given by his parents I never knew, for I straightway christened him "Professor," because of the long, black coat he wore over his other garments. The word happens to be easy for Persians to articulate, so his companions took it up and the little man became Professor to us all. Donkeys carried the supplies and equipment.

An old wreck of a white horse, owned by the *charvardar*, served the double purpose of pack and riding animal. His load was very light, and placed in such a manner that his owner, or Hassan, could find a seat on his back when tired of walking.

My advisers suggested that I should take little food. I could live on the country. And certainly I must take an extra horse to provide against emergencies. The less pretentious the caravan, the less danger from highwaymen. The Ghevam-ul-Mulk gave me a letter addressed to all the *ketkhodas* (mayors) of villages within his realm.



(Upper) MY CARAVAN.

(Lower) "THE PROFESSOR," GHOLAM AND HASSAN.

THE LAST CARAVAN

So, thus equipped, my caravan passed through the Koran Gate of Shiraz, and took the Bagh-i-Shah road to Isfahan.

In an outer pocket of my coat I carried Neligan's little handbook on Persia. It gave me in advance some idea of the seventeen settlements through which I must pass before I reached my destination. Some would be only a few mud-huts within a village wall ; some had telegraph stations ; some had caravansaries. " Water brackish," he warned travellers about one place. And of another, " Supplies scarce." If I have a quarrel with Neligan's valuable little book it is that he does not make stronger the warning about scarcity of supplies in many places.

But both the pleasures and the hardships of the road were all before me when I stopped to have our passports stamped at the Koran Gate, so named because a copy of the holy book is walled within one of the towers. It was early, but already many caravans were astir, some entering the city, some going from it. Camels stretched their long necks forward with each lurching step. Their bells set Dil Gosha rearing and prancing. Evidently he was a city horse and as unaccustomed as was I to the sights and sounds of the road. But he soon found that there was no escape from the noise because Safar's horse was also belled.

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Alert to impressions that first day on caravan I felt heartily sorry for the few people who whizzed past in cars. It was so much more pleasant to be a part of this slower life of the road. I was happy in the thought of being a part of the great endless caravan, made up of many small caravans, moving across the highways of Western Asia.

The passing peasants greeted me :

“ *Salamun alaikum* ” (Peace be with you).

To which I answered “*Alaikum es salam*,” and added, “*Khuda hafis*” (God protect you). If either one or the other of us wished to be specially polite we would say, “May Allah never let your shadow grow shorter than my head.” That saying exhausted my stock of Persian. Any further conversation had to be carried on through Safar.

I passed a peasant woman, walking unveiled and holding close to her breast the lamb she was taking to market. The meat would only bring her four or five *kran*, but the skin, the precious Persian lamb skin, would increase the sum many times. On the broad back of a mule was a flock of hens, lorded over by a rooster. A man driving a donkey toward the foothills pushed, shoved, and shouted at the cruelly overloaded animal. I asked Safar what he was saying.

THE LAST CARAVAN

“ He is cursing,” Safar said. “ He does not curse the donkey, but the man who hired him the donkey. He calls the owner many bad names. Too bad to repeat to *Sahib*.”

For lunch we stopped at a road-guard station, typical of the many that offered us hospitality. These are all of a pattern. Built of clay, they look like giant beehives. At the bottom is room for two horses. In the dome, entered by a ladder from the outside, are sleeping-quarters for the men. Villages have these stations just outside the wall, but along the road, whether on plain or mountain-top, they are isolated, dreary, and seemingly deserted. There was never any sign of life when we approached one ; for the guards were out patrolling the road, but they soon returned ; men in soldiers' uniforms, but with shoulder-straps of blue instead of the white of the army, and with sun-and-lion shield on their *kholas*. Usually these men looked half starved, but they were always courteous. They lent a hand in the care of the horses, and often brought out tea. That and sugar they always had ; contributions, voluntary or involuntary, from wayfarers. Outside one road-guard station I saw on the ground iron bars fitted with chains and clamps in which captured highwaymen are pinioned until they can be taken to

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Isfahan or Shiraz for trial, and for the punishment of bastinado or hanging.

We spent the first night at Zarghun, which appears to be cut into the side of a mountain, and is six *farsakhs* from Shiraz. This town, with its three or four thousand inhabitants, was the largest settlement I was to see until I should reach Abadeh, near Isfahan.

When we asked for the *kethhoda*, a white-bearded sheikh came forward and led us to his house. We rode in state into the courtyard, and the animals were then taken to a barn. Having as yet obtained no standards of comparison I did not realise on how lavish a scale this entertainment was.

At risk of losing caste I followed my crew to the barn to make certain that Dil Gosha was receiving the wash and massage I had told Hassan to give him. The men had been as amazed at the bucket I had bought for Dil Gosha's leg-washing as I had been on first learning that they did not remove their animals' packs at night. "We sleep in our clothes to keep warm, why should not they also?" I was asked when I remonstrated about the custom. But I was pleased to see that great care was taken to keep the animals' backs in good condition. Even though all, except Dil Gosha, wore their trappings through the night, the saddles were taken



(Upper) A ROAD-GUARD STATION.

(Lower) LUNCH WITH THE GUARDS.

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off and the straw-pads beneath examined and replenished before they were strapped on again.

When I returned to the courtyard I found it occupied by servants, who were shaking and beating rugs. The clouds of dust gave proof that house-cleaning was not a daily occurrence.

With a few more stops I became accustomed to this sort of welcome. It is always done. Courtesy to the traveller requires that his room be clean, even though the traveller must swallow all the dust of the cleaning. As soon as the rugs were spread I was bidden to enter. I found myself in a dark, windowless room, chill as a cellar, the typical atmosphere of the mud-houses. Tea and a charcoal fire were brought. Afterwards I was left to myself. It is not etiquette for the host to disturb the traveller until he is ready to proceed, when he comes to bid a ceremonious farewell, and the traveller may or may not give the expected *inam*. Whatever the host's opinion about a guest who made no payment, he will say nothing.

Whilst I drank my tea I heard from somewhere out in the village the sound of much shouting and applause. Not far away a marriage celebration was in progress. The bride had just said " Yes " to the representatives of the bridegroom ; the guests were rejoicing, were being served with

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sweetmeats and sherbets, and were puffing at the *kalyans*. Later, after the ceremonial baths, and after both bride and groom had been dyed with henna, there would be processions through the streets. The bride, attended by many ladies, and by her relatives and a shouting populace, would ride on horseback to the home of the bridegroom. It would have been pleasant to have lingered to see as much of this festivity as a stranger might, but I was a wayfarer and must go on to-morrow.

Safar set up my cot in the second-story room assigned to me, and I, tired enough to make the thought of an early bedtime agreeable, was just ready to stretch myself on it when a commotion in the courtyard told of a new arrival. This time there was no formal reception nor beating of rugs. Almost immediately there appeared on the stairs a man whom I recognised as one of the *farrashes* of my Shiraz host. He handed me a note.

Would I, the note inquired, be so good as to return to the bearer the cook-book missing from the shelves of the room I had occupied in the telegraph station.

For a moment I was dazed. Even one day on caravan had made Shiraz and the happenings there seem remote, but surely had I stolen a cook-book I should recall the circumstance. Then light began

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to dawn. I remembered that one day I had found Safar in my room reading a dilapidated pamphlet of recipes. He put it down reluctantly when I entered, and asked me whether I thought our host would give the book to him. With its binding gone, and many pages torn or missing, it looked to me to be of considerably less value than a last year's almanac, and when I saw that Safar's heart was set on possessing the book—his Bagdad coffee-shop in mind, no doubt—I told him I felt sure he might have it, but that I would inquire. My host was not to be found at the minute, and the matter slipped my memory.

That my Shiraz host was a man of many idiosyncrasies had been all too evident during my stay. But surely even he would not have despatched a messenger to ride six *farsakhs*, hot on my trail, for the purpose of reclaiming that dirty, torn recipe book. I cornered Safar and told him to get the book he had taken from the telegraph station. He did. And it was not the battered pamphlet that had been the subject of our conversation. It was a new, well bound, large copy of *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Cookery and Household Management* ! Safar had planned to do better by his coffee-shop in Bagdad than I had guessed.

At sunrise I had my breakfast of tea, clabbered

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milk and fruit, and rode away while the men were still loading the animals. This became the daily programme. I was in no danger of losing my way by going ahead, for there is only one caravan-trail. It was pleasant to have a little riding solitude in the brisk morning air, but I was never sorry to hear, in about an hour, the tinkle of the *yuba's* bell.

When Safar joined me he brought gossip of the village, and would often talk about himself. The morning we left Zarghun his mind reverted to another occasion during which he had been temporarily under a cloud. Had, indeed, spent days in the Bagdad jail, though he was innocent of any crime.

"I was accused of stealing five thousand rupees from my master," he told me sadly. "The money was gone and I was suspected. But my master was in love with another man's wife and she was a bad woman. After six days in jail I was released. My master had to give me one hundred and twenty rupees damages, and a letter declaring me to be thoroughly honest." Safar did not say whether the bad woman had been the thief, but I so inferred.

He evidently realised that this was not the best possible moment to lay before me certain matters with regard to the other men ; matters which he later took up in detail. For example, that the

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drivers fed their horses on Dil Gosha's special food. That they were intentionally late in getting up in the morning, and stopped too long in the bath-houses. That they smoked opium. That they were not entitled to the advance wages I had paid them for as many days as we should be on the road, and that Hassan was the slave of his uncle Gholam, to whom the boy must give half of his wages. My only interest in this talk was to conjecture what Safar hoped to gain by it. The men of the crew each did his work competently, and with nothing else had I any concern.

During that second day we crossed several streams, forded the River Kur, and, some time in the afternoon, reached Kinareh on the eastern border of the great Marv-dasht plain. I had not realised we were so near to the ruins of Persepolis until the occupant of a lone hut on the mountain-side told me we were within a few miles. He pointed toward the broken columns in the distance, grey against the background of rock.

Early to-morrow I would ride that way ; meanwhile there must be a lodging for the night. I asked my informant where I might find the richest man in Kinareh, following a custom I found useful in places where there was not likely to be a *ketkhoda* ; since, in the small settlements, only the

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most prosperous find it convenient to take a lodger. The man said that he himself was the richest man in the village. He immediately jumped on to the back of a little white donkey and rode alongside to conduct me to his home, babbling pleasantly the while.

“ I am Meshedi Ali Agha. I am always on the look-out for people like you. I am the only man who can properly show you Persepolis, except the German archæologist Herzfeld, who lived for many months at the ruins. I made his kitchen for him. He did his own cooking. This is the same donkey that I rode when I went to Teheran, and on my pilgrimage to Meshed.”

The white donkey led us over green, marshy meadows through the village-gate into crooked, narrow alleys between mud walls, and finally brought us to the doorway of Ali Agha, the richest man in this settlement of a thousand people. His courtyard was the smallest I had yet seen, and, even before the animals of my caravan entered it, had swarmed with life, children, ducks, chickens, cows, calves, a goat, an ewe, and a donkey.

Dwelling-rooms opened off the court. The room set apart for guests formed a second story at one corner of the building, and from that vantage point I watched the activities going on below.

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Bread-making was under way in the *anderun*. Ali Agha's wife, one of them, mixed the dough. A daughter flattened it with her hands into thin sheets as big as a table napkin ; another baked each sheet quickly over a pan of coals, and placed it on the pile already done. From this pile an old grandmother lifted each sheet of bread with a stick, waved it to and fro in the air until thoroughly dried, and then placed it on another pile.

In another part of the *anderun* a girl was trying on a dress ; as different from the usual dark, sedate garb as could be imagined. This was to be worn at a wedding, and was vivid with colour. The long sleeves were yellow, blue, and green. The muslin coatee was red with white flowers ; gay above the black petticoat. On the girl's head was a high, black turban, with a scarf like a bridal veil thrown over it.

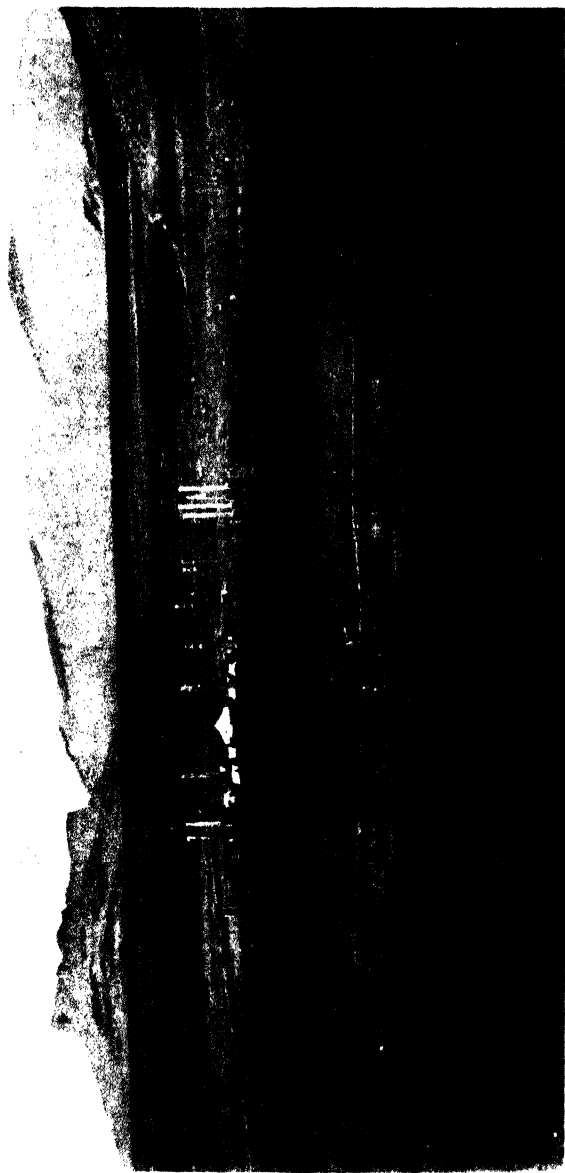
Children played in the yard. I went out to offer them toys I had bought in Paris for just such occasions, but they were received without enthusiasm. These mites preferred to keep to their own playthings, modelled of clay, horses, cows, and curious little whistles, in all probability the very counterparts of the toys the children had in Alexander's day. One boy held a black goat in his arms. There were no harsh voices to

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be heard in that yard, nor anywhere else in Persia.

At sunrise next morning I saw a little procession on the path that led past Agha's compound. It was made up of four men and five women, and though they walked with quick steps their heads were bowed and their manner sorrowful. The man who led had a stiff, linen-wrapped bundle on his outstretched arms. His dead baby. They were on their way to the cemetery half a mile distant in the open field. One of the women carried a big copper basin, another a copper water-jar. At the tail of the little procession walked the mother dressed in black. A little later, when I walked past the cemetery on my way to the ruins, I saw them washing the little dead body; they then wrapped it in white linen again and laid it in the grave.

Ali Agha rode beside me. The white donkey and Dil Gosha were neck and neck as we crossed the vast plain out of which rise the rocks, columns, and broken gateways, all that remains of glorious Persepolis. A city begun by the Iranians when they had been reclaimed from nomadry only a century and a half. Here they had made permanent habitations. Here they had taken the beauty of Babylon, of Egypt, and of Chaldea and made



PERSEPOLIS

THE LAST CARAVAN

it their own. Persepolis, begun by Darius and completed by Xerxes, was the last monument to the old civilisations.

In its ruins it is like a great platform, high above the plain. Out of this platform rise the columns and sculptures, the structures that, because they were of stone, were able to withstand not only fire but the wear of time and weather for twenty-five centuries. All that was of wood, all that was of sun-dried clay, in the palaces is gone. The ruthless hand of time has completed the work begun by Alexander's ruthless fire. Revenge for the Persian destruction of the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus? A deed to gratify the whim of a beautiful Greek courtesan? What does it matter? Probably Alexander was no better at tracing his actions back to a simple, single motive than are later and lesser men. The important and terrible thing is that Persepolis was burned.

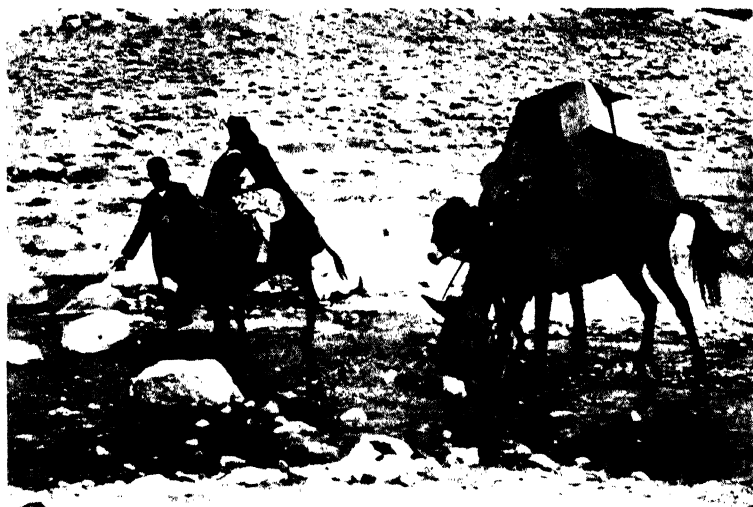
CHAPTER XII

THE LAST CARAVAN (*continued*)

A desert daughter of joy—Old Farsi village—Murghab plain—Cyrus' tomb—Family life at Saadaiabad—Deh Bid—An impromptu cabaret—Homosexuality in Iran—Quli Kush Pass—Khan-i-Khoreh—Camel-drivers' stories about camels—Abadeh—A return for hospitality—Yazd-i-Khast—Kumishah.

I HAD sent the caravan on when I made the detour to Persepolis. Back on the main road, after hours among the ruins, and before the rock sculptures, I passed the Ford lorry which makes the weekly run between Shiraz and Isfahan. Something had gone wrong. Three passengers stood by, watching the chauffeur climb in, out, and under, in patient but futile attempts to make the car move. So I gloated in the fact that I was not dependent on machinery.

When I overtook my caravan I found that it had been augmented by three persons, a black-clad woman, whose matronly face was unveiled, a three-year old child whom she carried, and a boy of perhaps eight, who walked beside her. On the other side was the Professor with his arm round her waist. Naturally I was astonished. I asked Safar



(Upper) SIVAND IN THE DISTANCE.

(Lower) THE "PROFESSOR" AND HIS TEMPORARY WIFE.

THE LAST CARAVAN

to find out who the lady was, and why she had joined my party. From his high seat on the *yuba* Safar surveyed the group like a judge eyeing prisoners. The Professor answered his rapid fire of questions. The woman had been cast off by her husband. She made her living wandering from village to village, and from caravansary to caravansary, making temporary marriages. In a society less tolerant, and given to calling hard names, she would have been looked upon as an itinerant prostitute, so I said to Safar, " But if she fails to make a temporary marriage where will she stay to-night? Who would take her and her children in? "

" Anyone," he answered. " She may stay anywhere." The woman remained with us until we made our stop for the night at Sivand.

That mountain village was the home of my *charvardar*, and he offered me hospitality. When I was comfortably established in the mud-hut, I sent my letter to the *kethhoda*, for I was still in the domain of the Ghevam-ul-Mulk. The mayor extended his courtesy by sending me chickens, cheese, and milk. Also a fine rug to sit on while I ate them.

The *charvardar*'s three children came to gaze at the newcomer with their bright Persian eyes, and

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I gave to each of them a tablet of Kerbela earth, which I had discovered was the most appreciated gift I could make to any Shiah, young or old. The children ran away with their treasures, and straightway every male member of the household presented himself and intimated that he, too, desired a tablet. When at sunset the *azaan* call sounded from the minaret of the tiny village mosque I opened my shutters and saw them all, men and children, praying with their foreheads pressed against the Kerbela earth. Even though these tablets lacked the inscription from the Koran, which lack had made it possible for me, an unbeliever, to buy them, and even though they were the gift of one who was not of the faithful, they were sacred earth and most precious.

Sivand is an old Farsi village with many remnants of ancient custom. Its vernacular is not the language of modern Persia. Safar was unable to understand the conversation between the *ketkhoda* and the *charvardar*. He resented this somewhat, and was probably more haughty than he would otherwise have been when a man, whose leg had been crushed under a cart, sent to beg me to come and cure him.

“My *ferringhi* makes books, not bones,” Safar answered the messenger.

THE LAST CARAVAN

He was troubled because he could not get a tub for my bath, but managed excellently by throwing hot and cold water over me. The family lived meagrely. Perhaps once or twice a year, on festal occasions, they would have mutton. The ordinary fare would be beans and cucumbers, supplemented with bread, cheese, and milk. A piece of chicken I had left, because it was too tough to eat, was given to a sick child in the belief that anything coming from the plate of a person in health will work healing.

After supper the *charvardar* went out into the village, and returned with the disturbing news that there had been trouble on the road a few stages ahead of us. The driver of a car had refused to give a road-guard a ride. The guard had then pulled his gun. A hand-to-hand fight had followed, and, in the scuffle, the gun had been fired, and two passengers killed. The road-guard had escaped. It sounded lawless and terrible, but I learned next day that, like bazaar rumours the world over, the story had grown out of all proportion to its basic facts. Some trouble there had been, but hardly more than a controversy.

The district around Sivand is the summer home of some of the migratory khans I had met above the Persian Gulf. Had I been travelling a few

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months later I might have seen the dark tents of Abdul Khan's people ; and of the brothers Amrullah and Hadi ; as much at home here, on the great heights, as in the narcissus fields of the south. But the biting morning air, and the frost on the ground, when we made our early start, told me that summer was still far away. Much of the day's ride was hot, however, for we soon entered the great Murghab plain. I left my caravan on the direct road to Saadaïabad to make its slow way, and with Safar I galloped away on a detour that would bring me to the site of Pasargadae, the first capital of the Achæmenian kings. For I wanted to pay passing, if hurried, tribute at the tomb of the great Cyrus.

I rode across the plain and past the poor mud village which lies near to the mausoleum. Madar-i-Sulaiman it is called, for, in the strange muddle of history with Moslem and Semitic legend, the peasants round about speak of the tomb as that of the mother of Solomon. Barren women there make offerings and intercession that they may become mothers.

The seven tiers of steps that lead to the mausoleum are built of great blocks of white sandstone. They carry one almost fifty feet upward before one reaches the mausoleum, which is as high as



(Upper) IN A SIVAND COURTYARD.

(Lower) HASSAN CLEANING HARNESS IN COURTYARD AT KINAREH.

THE LAST CARAVAN

the pedestal of stairs. Through a low door one may enter the sepulchre. A Persian inscription is cut into the walls. The epitaph which ancient writers recorded ; the epitaph which they claimed Alexander read, and ordered re-cut in Greek characters, is not now to be found. "O thou, whosoever thou art and whencesoever thou comest (for I know that thou wilt come), I am Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire. Grudge me not, therefore, this little earth that covers my body." There is no trace left, but so long as the legend endures, the effacement of the stone-cut characters is of little consequence.

The old gateways, arches, and towers of Saadaï-abad give to the village, as one approaches it, the look of a fortified camp. Since it is without a telegraph station I presented the Ghevam-ul-Mulk's letter to the *ketkhoda*, Ishmael, and was made welcome. Ishmael was a colourful figure in a *sechok* instead of the *aba* I had come to expect to see everywhere. His blue silk shirt and yellow embroidered jacket were not altogether concealed by the grey gown which covered them. His home was the usual hollow square of mud-huts, and the courtyard they bordered seemed to be swarming with cats. They were common cats, and mangy. I never saw the Persian species except in the cities, for, as with

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us, they must be carefully bred. And nowhere did I see dogs. To the Shiah this four-footed friend of ours is as unclean as is the pig. Man would be irretrievably contaminated if a dog licked his hand, and a cow's milk would be unusable if a dog brushed against her.

While my room was being prepared, the rugs shaken and cot set up, I climbed to the roof on stairs as narrow as a ladder, and nearly as steep. From that high look-out I had an excellent view of the village, and could see it better than by walking in the lanes lined by mud walls. Huts with courtyards ; a tiny bazaar ; a little mosque—all the necessities of a small community lay below me. When at sunset the *azaan* call came from the minaret I went to the roof again that I might see all the people come out to pray ; always a moving spectacle.

Ishmael made extra prayers that sunset. He called on Allah for special aid because he was in trouble ; both his wife and baby were ill. He brought the child to me for treatment, but I advised him to hurry with it to Shiraz, to more experienced hands than mine. The child was very sick, and I had a vision of another early morning procession to a cemetery.

Ishmael's little compound was a busy place.

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Each of the compartments, protected from view from the courtyard, housed something interesting to me. Ishmael pushed open some of the shutters that I might see. The first room we entered was set aside for the carpet-weaving women. It was typical of those I saw in many places ; there seems to be no village, however small, where this staple industry of Persia is not carried on. There was a forewoman whose daily wage was fifteen *shahis*, the equivalent of seven and a half cents. Her four apprentices received nothing. Little girls picked the wool and prepared it for weaving. I saw how slow the work of carpet-making is. On a four-foot rug the work of two girls progresses at the rate of about two inches a day. When a row was finished I watched them push back the cross-bar of the loom with an ibex horn. These girls were working with seven colours ; four had been made at home with vegetable dyes ; the others were imported aniline ; the girls called them *nili*.

I had been told by Persians that if a stranger enters a room where a girl is weaving a carpet she ceases work and throws the spool of wool at his feet in token of respect ; also, probably, in the hope that her attention will be rewarded by a piece of silver. But this did not happen in the carpet-making room at Saadaïabad. The girls kept diligently at work,

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and apparently had neither eye nor thought for the stranger.

Another room contained a dozen objects which looked like huge hot water bottles. They proved to be goat-skins filled with Ishmael's supply of *kormeh*. I had not yet tasted that robust food ; mutton or goat meat, boiled in its own grease with a little salt. As a treat I bought ten *krans*' worth for the *charvardar*, and the same for myself. In this country, where sheep and goats are costly, the latter averaging thirty-five *tomans* each, fresh meat is scarcely ever eaten, and *kormeh* rarely. Ishmael was a well-to-do man, as those dozen goat-skins of *kormeh* bore evidence, but his family ate it only on holidays. After he had taken out the quantity I had bought he sewed up the goat-skin again, and put it back in the room.

I was really hungry that night in Saadaïabad, and, having learned by experiment that *kormeh* was not the food for me, I decided to make an inroad on my scant supply of tins ; so, with my mouth fixed for sardines, and a Melton Mowbray pork pie, I told Safar to get them. He came back in a minute and reported, " I cannot find them. The *charvardar* has taken them."

" Impossible," I said. " The box is nailed."

" But they are gone," Safar insisted, looking

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innocent, superior, and troubled all at the same time. But I remembered the cook-book, and the Bagdad coffee-shop. Also I was convinced that none of my crew would stop on the road to open a nailed box and take our two tins. "You must look until you find them," I said.

Safar went into the kitchen, where the *charvardar*, the Professor, and Hassan were squatting by the charcoal fire. What sounded like a dramatic conversation ensued. This was the first time (almost the only time) that I heard raised voices in Persia, where tones are soft and manners gentle. Safar was evidently angrily accusing them. He returned to me with "They say they did not do it, but they did."

"Find the tins," I said.

After a while Safar came with them, but with no explanation. He wore a dejected, injured expression, which was a little amusing in the circumstances. I never knew where he had found the tins, but shall always suspect that my unexpected hunger prevented them from making a journey to Bagdad. Safar had more than a little of Hajji Baba in him.

After dinner, by the light of my lantern, I explored my room. It was evidently the *anderun*, and the family had been moved out to give me place.

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A room of many niches, therefore typically Persian. All the niches were full. So varied were the contents that I set down a few in my note-book. On a shelf were some women's slippers with extremely high heels ; small shaving mirrors, square, round, and oval ; a fan. The cheap linen hangings looked to be of Japanese make. A portrait of Reza Shah as Minister of War was the only picture. In another of the recesses were three small wedding-chests, plush-covered and embroidered with gilt. There were animal sketches ; china ; a home-made handbag ; several demi-johns of syrup. One niche contained nothing but lamps and wind-lights. Another, hung with white muslin, was so full that its contents bulged out against the curtain. But my curiosity was appeased. I blew out my lantern and went to sleep in preparation for an early start in the morning.

Ghadirabad, five *farsakhs* away, was our next goal. Sometimes, during the morning, I happened to be a little behind my caravan. The Professor and *charvardar* were ambling along with heads close together, looking at some Christmas cards, received at Shiraz, which I had given them the night before. Suddenly the Professor dropped the cards, and, with flying coat-tails, dashed away at right angles from our course and straight into a snowy pass.

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"He is after partridges," Safar explained.

"But he has no gun."

"That does not matter. Their heads will be buried in the snow, and we need only pick them up."

I did not join in the sport. Wrapped in my pushteen I wanted nothing so much as to get to shelter. The five *farsakhs* through mountain passes where Dil Gosha could only walk because of the rough road, followed by the treeless plain, seemed endless. On the outskirts of Ghadirabad was the usual small cemetery. I noticed among the stone slabs two cone-like clay elevations. These held corpses awaiting transportation to Meshed and Khorasan, the holy cities nearer than Najaf and Kerbela, when funds sufficient for the pilgrimage could be accumulated. Nowhere in this Shiah country is one ever free from reminders of those gruesome pilgrimages of the dead.

We were now outside the Ghevam-ul-Mulk's territory, and the best lodging I could get was with a small farmer. While the family cleared and made ready the *anderun* I dropped down on a dung-heap in the corner of the courtyard, and a donkey sniffed at my boots. Chickens, scratching for worms, threw dust in my face, but I was too tired to move or even to care. I slept that night

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as soundly as an animal driver, but before I dropped off I thought with amusement of some of my New York friends who find it necessary to make occasional stays at Muldoon's camp.

The next day, making an early start, we left the road and took to the caravan trail, through chinks of passes and short cuts only possible in single file. In one pass I saw the mounds which were, no doubt, responsible for the name, Old Women's Graves. We travelled as fast as the hard road would permit, for I was eager to reach Deh Bid, with its comfortable telegraph station, that day. The road-guards' posts checked off the distance for me. At one I accepted some *arac*, fiery to the throat but warming, and warmth was much needed on that trail as it climbed toward the high mountains.

The sky was clear and blue when we came to the plateau, lying at an altitude of seven thousand five hundred feet, and edged with sheer snow-covered mountains. Kuh Bul, the highest, towers to more than fourteen thousand feet, and its near neighbours reach ten thousand. In the centre of this plain, which looked to me as wide as the desert, I saw Deh Bid, recorded by Neligan as the coldest place in Persia, and before I left it I had come to believe the village was the coldest place on earth. We did not enter at the village-gate, but rode directly



(Upper) ON THE SIDE OF A PASS.
(Lower) PASSING A CAMEL CARAVAN.

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to the telegraph compound, perhaps a quarter of a mile distant.

The broken walls of an old, abandoned village were near. A little farther away I saw the shooting tower of Bahram Gur—one of Persia's traditional heroes—rising above the ruins of an old castle ; a treasure-trove awaiting the archæologist's spade. The yellow-brown mud of these walls made the only note of colour in that vast, snowy stretch, for the buildings and wall of the telegraph compound were white. A garden with cypress trees bordered the path leading from the outer to the inner gate. The courtyard had something suggestive of Europe, for the surrounding walls were made of clay bricks instead of plastered mud.

When I entered the station and saw a chair and table I felt that I had returned to Europe. True, both were rickety, but they looked sumptuous to me after my days without such common comforts. There was, too, a little table for the wash-basin, a blazing fire, and a real bed.

The moment we arrived I gave orders that we would not start until two hours after sunrise next day, for I intended to spend those two hours enjoying the luxury of that bed instead of being cramped on my camp-cot. But it so fell out that my enthusiasm for the place became exhausted

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before we could move on. High winds and more snow prevented a start on the dangerous road beyond Deh Bid next day. During the day it was discovered that Dil Gosha had gone lame and must be treated by the local blacksmith, so those two luxurious hours became two dreary days and nights.

European as was the equipment, the station was in charge of two Persians. There was scant food—Deh Bid is too cold for chickens and cattle—and that first evening Safar prepared a meagre meal of rice and something out of a tin. The thing most important for our comfort was firewood, but it was scarce and costly, so I told him to get all he could, regardless of cost, though even this supply was very soon exhausted and we had to resort to camel-dung.

The room we used for kitchen and sleeping-quarters for the crew became a dance-hall as well. Safar went out into the village for entertainers, and musicians and dancers came. Once before, on this caravan, Safar had tried to give me a taste of native art. This was at Kinareh, but the musicians had arrived at seven o'clock in the morning, which is not the best hour for either performers or spectators. The dancing had been little more than clownish movements; the music a rhythmic beat.

This night in Deh Bid there were two drums, a

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flute, a tambourine, and a *tar*, the Persian harp. My chair, from which I refused to be parted, was set in a corner. Cross-legged on the floor sat the rest of the audience, Safar, the *charvardar*, the Professor, Hassan, the two telegraph operators, and a road-guard who had happened to arrive.

The music was typical of all that which one hears in the Near East. The haunting, monotonous melody was strongly accented by the drums, and lightened by the jingle of the tambourine. The chief dancer was a boy of twelve. Many of his dance-figures were similar to those we accept as characteristic of Russia. But he had other dances. In one he used a glass and saucer with castanet effect, then set the glass on his head, bent his knees, rose straight again, and swung into a different figure. Afterwards he circled the room, paused before me and swayed backwards until his head lay on my knees. We all then dropped money into his mouth. Another boy sang a long ballad glorifying Reza Shah, and when he had finished he passed his *khola* for a collection.

The next night we had much the same entertainment, warming ourselves by the smudgy, camel-dung fire. This time a woman, a Tartar with long braids of hair, had been added to the list of performers. Mine was the only applause she

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received. It is the grace and beauty of young boys, not of women, that wins the admiration of Persian men.

Even in these days when homosexuality, flaunted in every large city of the world, has become a thing of common knowledge and discussion, the extent of its practice in Persia is amazing. There it is not the perversion of the ultra-artistic, the experiment in sensation and emotion that it is in the West, but apparently a common practice with all sorts and conditions of men. One searches for a clue to the cause. A German scientist believes the practice to be the logical heritage of a people whose forebears travelled far with flocks and caravans, taking with them few women, or none.

All day snow fell and a high wind raged, so I wrote letters and posted up my note-book. The silence that prevailed in the next room was eloquent of "the pipe of forgetting." Of course, they smoked openly, without sense of guilt, as is done in every coffee-house in Persia. And in the way the habit there obtains I doubt whether it is especially pernicious ; certainly its effects seem to be no worse than would be those of the alcohol forbidden by their religion. The addicts are never quarrelsome or violent. At their best moments they see life in a pleasant, rosy haze. At their

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worst they sleep, or talk in whispers. Opium is in the very air of Persia. In the summer the sense-deadening odour of the poppies comes on every breeze from the great stretches of white and violet flowers, topping plants which, in wet seasons, reach a height of five feet.

As the day progressed, and word of Dil Gosha's lameness was brought, I grew restless and impatient of the delay. There could be no foretelling how long I might be detained. I realised that I had gloated too much when I had seen the broken-down car. Mechanism can usually be put right in a few hours; with a horse it may be a matter of days. I began to fear I might not reach Isfahan in time for the Nu Ruz celebration. Telegraph connections had been broken by the storm, so I could not wire for a car, but I posted a man on the road in the hope that a mail-lorry might come. Usually they were overloaded with native passengers and luggage, but I gave the man instructions, if one did turn up, to find a place in it for me at any cost. None came, however.

Dil Gosha was treated by the local blacksmith, who found that the trouble had come from bad shoeing. The blacksmith extracted the pus, and then bound the legs with bags of hot salt and ashes. In a day or so, I was told, he would be ready for

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travel, and when he was pronounced cured I gave him one more day of rest by sparing him my weight. He was led, and I used Safar's horse. Safar walked with the others, and I soon wished that I, too, had walked and so saved myself from a frost-bitten leg. The trouble had probably started when I went into the courtyard at Deh Bid in the night, and the subsequent ride, in the merciless cold of the day we left, numbed it to complete insensibility.

When we reached a village and I could make examination I found that it was beginning to turn blue. The only remedy that I knew of was snow, and by the time I discovered my condition we had passed beyond the snow region. Fortunately the men of my crew knew other expedients, for they packed my leg in steaming hot camel-dung, coming every half hour with a fresh pack. After six hours of this I declared myself cured, with a leg as red as a boiled lobster, but a lavish use of vaseline prevented soreness.

It was in this same village that I sat with the family around a *korcee*, the square hole in the centre of the hut where a fire smoulders. A low bench covers the *korcee*, and is spread with a piece of felt, thick enough to prevent the passage of air and wide enough to serve as lap-robe for all who sit around this curious family hearth. As many as eight can



(Upper) AFTER THE PASSAGE OF THE QULI-KUSH.

(Lower) YADOLLAH KHAN, MY HOST IN VAZDUKTASH.

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gather round the *korcee*. Their legs dangle down into the hole ; their meals are served on the bench, and when they have finished eating they lie back, pull the cloth over their head, and go to sleep. By this means one is kept warm, but at the cost of good fresh air.

The day we left Deh Bid turned out to be the hardest on the caravan. We crossed Quli Kush, the Pass of the Wild Men and Women, and perilous in winter. I was told that a few weeks before our crossing a caravan of forty camels and twenty-five men had perished of the cold on the pass, and the bodies and skeletons I saw along the way was evidence that, for once, a horrible rumour had some basis in fact. Quli Kush had been, the winter before, completely impassable for more than three months.

We seemed to move forward by inches. When at last we reached the summit, and started downward on the precipitous trail, the Professor spread rugs in front of his horse to prevent slipping. Below us were hazy mountains without snow. In the far distance I could see another snow-capped range it would not be necessary to cross, and immediately before me were green hills and valleys.

Near the foothills is Khan-i-Khoreh. Neligan labels it, "No water. Supplies scarce." This

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I found to be an under-statement of the prevailing conditions. Except for the caravansary, large and ancient, there is nothing but a tiny settlement of four huts, one of them empty, surrounded by a twelve-foot wall. Since there was no village there was no headman to grant hospitality, so we went to the caravansary. Because of my leg, and of the dysentery that had come upon me, we stayed two nights in Khan-i-Khoreh, and though I fretted at the delay I found the caravansary life full of interest. Notwithstanding the cold and the bad travel conditions many caravans were on the road.

That first night every one of the thirty-six compartments of the caravansary was full. In the back part would be the animals other than camels; in the front part the men. Or rather that is the supposed allotment of space, but in the extreme cold both animals and men crowded into the rear of the compartments. I know because I shared Dil Gosha's pitch-dark quarters. He was not tied, and the hole was very small, but I had no fear that he would trample on me.

Three dervishes also claimed the hospitality of the caravansary. Their arrival followed quickly upon ours, and by intruding into my compartment they roused my people to high words and readiness for direct action. I finally pacified the dervishes

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by giving them *inam*, and by letting them sing a song; a gay ditty, but with a chorus praising Allah.

Of all the living things around me in Khan-i-Khoreh the camels interested me most. From evening, when the caravans arrived, until the morning, when they started on again, the courtyard was full of them. The hundreds that I had passed on the road had given me a sort of familiarity, and much liking, for the strong, patient beasts with wistful, knowing eyes, and sure though lurching step. That was a comradeship of the road, but here I was at home with them; saw them with their loads, and at rest; saw the fist-size balls of oats and barley kneaded together and thrust into their mouths in the evening; and saw their silent acceptance of the fact that there was no water here. No doubt some had come from places where the grass was still green, and so could bear a five or six-day interval between waterings as no hardship; but those from the frozen areas should have had water twice a day.

The following morning, after the caravans had gone on, I saw a camel lying by itself in the courtyard. It had been left behind to recover from an injury to one of its legs caused by a slip on the ice, and the treatment given was to bind a red-hot iron to the leg.

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Usually there were half a dozen camels to one *shotóri*. The strongest ones, able to carry as much as nine hundred pounds, came from Kerman. The handsome, long-haired variety had been bred in Tabriz. All were belled. I watched them kneel to be relieved of their heavy loads, and kneel to be loaded in the morning. The loads never had to be lifted upon the camel, they were merely pushed alongside and tied on with ropes. Then the *shotóri* whispered something that sounded like "scissors," and the laden animals struggled to their feet and were ready for the road.

Being winter, which is the mating season with camels, the bulls were spirited and fierce. As one of them roared I had the good luck to see him exhale a great bubble of foam, which, still bladder-like and unbroken, he drew back into his throat again.

Gholam, seeing my interest in the camels, was prodigal of information about them. They had, he said, wonderful memories, especially memories for hate. They never forget a wrong done to them. Here, in this very caravansary at Khan-i-Khoreh, a camel had knelt on one leg of the sleeping *shotóri* and had torn the other leg from the man's body. It was known that, months before, the *shotóri* had beaten the camel more cruelly than usual with an

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iron bar, and the camel had bided its time. There is a Persian saying, "He has more hatred than a camel." But they can give affection too. I saw this in the way they would rub against the *shotóri*, and accept the rubbing of their soft noses and tiny ears. At the hospital gates in Isfahan I saw, too, in how gentle a manner a camel can sink to its knees when its load is a litter containing its sick *shotóri*.

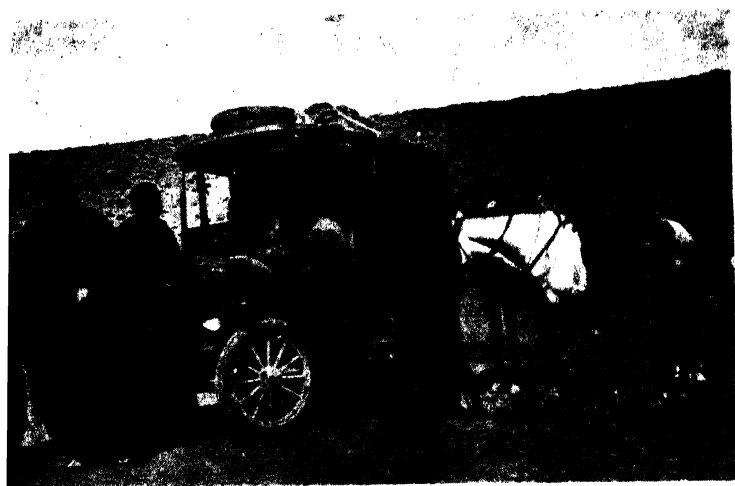
Somewhere I have heard the legend that the camel is the only depository of Allah's hidden name ; the one which, after the manner of oriental religions, may not be spoken, or even known, by humans. The legend says : " Allah has one hundred names ; some of them are Good, Just, Great, Truth, Highest, All Powerful. Ninety-nine of these names are known to the faithful, and are told off on their rosaries. But to the hundredth bead they can give no name, for that is the authentic one in which resides the unsolvable mystery of Allah ; the name no human mouth is worthy to invoke. But this name is known to the camel. The prophet himself breathed it into the animal's ear ; in happy remembrance, perhaps, of his old days as camel-driver. Or it may have been in recognition of the services of the camel who carried him from Mecca to Damascus ; then, with a

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presentiment of the dangers a nature so voluptuous as Mohammed's would encounter in that beautiful city, wheeled straight about and carried him back into the desert." The old story came into my mind during that time of close association with the camels at Khan-i-Khoreh. It seemed to bear evidence of the respect and affection in which the animals are held, however cruel the treatment of them may sometimes appear.

All the enthusiasm for caravan life with which I had set out from Shiraz had been exhausted by the time we were ready to start on from Khan-i-Khoreh toward Surmaq, four and a half *farsakhs* away. The most difficult part of the journey was now over. There would be no more passes to cross, but our road climbed steadily toward the high mountains at the foot of which Surmaq lies.

Safar and I rode ahead of the caravan. When we were still, by my estimate, about two *farsakhs* from the village, I sent him on to hunt out quarters. I rested by the roadside for a while, and when, riding alone, I came to a village I cursed Safar for not having stationed himself outside the walls to lead me straight to whatever shelter he had found. Minutes passed and he did not appear, so I rode through the gate and all the narrow, winding lanes of the village. A few people came out of the



(p-1) A CARAVAN AT REST.

(cc) AN ANIMAL CARAVAN COMES TO THE AID OF MODERN TRANSPORT

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courtyards to eye the stranger, but questions were useless. I could not make myself understood. Safar was nowhere to be seen. I returned to the gate and along the trail I had taken—the wrong trail for Surmaq—and which had led me to one of the villages off the caravan road. These settlements are more numerous than are those on the main road—greater safety from highwaymen no doubt enters into the choice of location—and are an unexplored field for some traveller in Persia.

On arriving at the point where I made my wrong turning I saw my caravan ambling along. Hassan was riding the white horse. My typewriter, which was his especial responsibility, and which he handled like a basket of eggs, was on his knees, and on the top of it perched a duck. I felt that I had recovered my family, and we all kept together until we reached Surmaq and the caravansary, the best shelter Safar had been able to find.

Nor was this caravansary so comfortable as the one at Khan-i-Khoreh. There was no balustrade separating the covered part from the courtyard, and no division into compartments. Everyone slept in straw and manure. But everyone slept. The animal drivers dropped down beside their charges as soon as the unloading had been done. A white sheet, rigged between two bales

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of merchandise, was an indication that the leader of a caravan was taking his rest there.

We came late in the afternoon, in time to see many caravans arrive. A rich merchant conducting his own caravan of sugar and tea from Bushire to Isfahan welcomed me to his fire and to a share of his rice and tea, while Safar went in quest of wood for a fire of our own. Dervishes came ; they sang and told tales, entertaining these travellers on the great Asiatic highway as they have been entertained throughout the centuries. A man in a long, grey, silver-buttoned coat led black-robed women hither and thither. He was the broker for temporary marriages, and took a generous percentage out of the women's earnings.

In the morning I wakened late. Except for my small caravan the caravansary was empty. Or, rather, almost empty. In the centre of the courtyard stood a donkey awaiting the return of his *mullah* owner. Three scavenger-birds perched on the walls, but there were few scraps for them. Piles of ashes and manure were all that was left as a reminder that a hundred men and animals had, last night, made the place their home.

Abadeh seemed almost a city in comparison with the settlements in which I had lately tarried. We covered the six down-grade *farsakhs* that separate



(Upper) AT SURMAQ. TYPICAL HOUSE OF THE WELL-TO-DO IN A MUI VILLAGE.

(Lower) HOLY MEN WHO ENTERTAIN AS WELL AS PRAY.

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this large village from Surmaq without incident of any special interest. I was too eager to arrive to be very observant, but I did not fail to note that outside several small settlements were people washing clothes. Even those on caravan stopped by brooks to do a little laundry. Were we, I wondered, nearing a part of Persia where cleanliness ranked uncommonly high in the scale of virtues? I asked Safar.

“ But we are within a few days of the New Year,” he said. “ For Nu Ruz everybody must have clean clothes.”

I had a less happy explanation of the next phenomenon to rouse my curiosity. Outside the walls of Abadeh stand mortar pillars which are both execution-place and graves of highwaymen. Offenders have been walled within them and left to perish. Dil Gosha shied away from these sinister objects. Could an odour have come to him through the mortar, I wondered.

Abadeh is an important village, and draws from a district of about ten thousand people. The place is even more noted than Kazarun for fine shoe-making, and its wood-carving is renowned throughout Persia. I found the telegraph station to be in charge of Armenians who spoke English. A young daughter, who had been educated in Isfahan,

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told me sadly that she, her father, and mother were the only Christians in the village. But Abadeh is not all Shiah. Bahaism abounds there as it does—though usually unavowed—in many places in Persia.

Several travellers arrived in motor-cars and shared with me the hospitality of the telegraph station. One was an Armenian missionary going by way of Bushire and Bombay to a new post somewhere in India. These wayfarers, like the villagers, looked upon me, a European travelling with an animal caravan, as something of a curiosity. And more and more I realised how soon such travel for pleasure will be an anachronism. How soon railways and motor-trucks will be used for the transporting of goods, and the camel, like the horse in Western lands, will find its occupation gone. Speed and efficiency, and something of comfort, will have come at the cost of picturesqueness, and the yet greater cost of intimate knowledge of the country crossed.

The streets of Abadeh were filled with black-robed women. Many were wailing, and sounds of wailing came from the courtyards. Someone had died and there was general mourning. But a busy trade was being plied in the bazaar, and I came away laden with wooden carvings and sherbet-

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spoons made from pear and boxwood. The shoes tempted me, but the donkey's pack was already considerably bulkier because of those I had bought in Kazarun, so I refrained, lest Customs officials should suspect me of being a shoe merchant.

Neither in Abadeh itself, nor, indeed, in any of these villages, is there anything to remind one of military conditions. But on the road next day I had evidence of the new conditions that have dawned in the Persian army. We met a dozen prisoners, arrested in Isfahan as deserters, who were being taken back to Shiraz under guard. And some light on the reasons for desertion came in talk with two road-guards. Both men were sick with venereal disease, and I asked why they did not get medical treatment, as they were so near to Isfahan.

The answer was, "It might take forty letters before we could get service. And we have no money to pay. We have had no pay for three months."

When I asked why they had enlisted, one answered, with astonishing frankness, "We enlisted several years ago, when soldiers might do what they pleased. Now we can no longer rob people on caravan, and so we have no money. Nothing. We would run away, but we have only

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these clothes and we would be caught." I could appreciate their dilemma but had no helpful advice to give. I could only offer condolence through Safar, and go on.

Shulgistan was to have been our next stop, but when I saw the accommodation there I remounted Dil Gosha and we rode back half a *farsakh* to Jafarabad. This is a village of about a dozen dwellings, and recently a few huts have been built there for the accommodation of officers. These we occupied.

After Safar had given me food—a smoked fish bought in the bazaar at Abadeh—and I was stretched for the night on my cot, he came into my cell again.

"A rich *Seyyid* has come," he said. "He has two ladies with him. May I give them some tea?"

Of course, I assented. I was accustomed by this time to the habit of the head boy of one party offering hospitality, subject to his master's approval, to another party. In the dim light I saw two black bundles being ushered into the cell across the way, but I knew nothing more of the festivity there until I heard the car chug away in the early morning. Safar told me that we had entertained the most important man in those parts, *Seyyid*

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Yadollah of Yazd-i-Khast, and that he invited us to visit him.

Seven *farsakhs* lay between us and this offered hospitality in Yazd-i-Khast, and most of this distance lay across a plain, with only two or three tiny, mud villages. The monotony of the ride was broken by a meeting with a cavalcade of soldiers escorting mule-carts, piled high with rifles and ammunition that had been taken from the khans. But this modern scene was more than balanced by the old Jew, white-bearded and venerable in his robes, who rode on a donkey from village to village seeking bits of ancient art. A dealer in antiques he was, with a shop in Isfahan, but he might, from his appearance, have been a survival from Bible days.

Finally I saw, in the far distance, what seemed to be another mud village, not far from the foothills of a snow-capped mountain range. The mud walls of the village were long in view, but much riding seemed to bring me no nearer. Then the road veered suddenly to the right and began a steep descent into a ravine. With another turn Yazd-i-Khast came into full view, its houses clustered against the mountain-side. Below lay the green valley, warm and balmy, with singing birds and a river. Streams trickled into tiny

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waterfalls between granite boulders. I had left the barren, tedious plain and had come to a bit of paradise.

The cañon is nine *farsakhs* long, and that it was caused by earthquake there can be no doubt. The ancient village lay on the rim, and was entered by a drawbridge that was speedily withdrawn when enemies appeared. Yazd-i-Khast is very old ; older, some claim, even than Isfahan. There was a time when the village had more than three hundred houses. The caravansary's four hundred years are manifested by its sorry need of repair ; a work soon to be financed by a wealthy man in Shiraz and the *Seyjid* Yadollah. In any case, I was glad that we had no need to tarry there, but might cross the river on Shah Abbas' bridge to the village on the opposite rim of the cañon.

The *Seyjid* Yadollah's home stands midway between the rim and the river—a fortress-like compound, yellow and imposing, built into the rock. My caravan was expected. Yadollah's nephew, Muzaffer, had climbed to the top to welcome and conduct us down the steep, winding, rocky path and through the gates of the palace.

I was established in a guest-room. A little later my host, whose hereditary title is Kalantare of Yazd-i-Khast, and who is lord over six thousand

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people, came to me from the *anderun*. Yadollah proved to be a man in the middle sixties, proud, handsome, and strong, the type one sees in the old paintings. He spoke no English, but his nephew knew a little, so, with Safar's help, we managed a conversation. He was eager to talk of world affairs.

"There is war with China," he said. It was the first I, far from newspapers, had heard of the disturbances there. Messages come over the Indo-European telegraph wires, and are the only news, so that, while on caravan, I was as much out of the world as though in Central Africa.

Like Haidar Khan, on the Persian Gulf, he wanted information, and expressions of opinion about international relations. "Is America bigger than England?" he asked. "Only a short time ago England was small, and now it seems to be the richest of countries. Does America like Russia? Does America like Germany? Does America like England? Is it likely that France and Germany, and Russia, and Belgium, and Japan, will ever combine against Great Britain? And where would America stand if this should happen?"

It would take a braver and more foolish man than I to attempt to answer off-hand such questions about world politics. I therefore tried to distract

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the great man's attention with questions about his own country. Yes, he admitted, a railroad should be built. It would swiftly further progress. There was little travel and commerce now. A railroad would cause more. And sadly, "Perhaps the British could take Persia now. It would be no hard matter. We have no rifles and no money."

Next day I crossed the border of the province of Fars, and entered the province of Isfahan. We rose early and travelled at top speed, determined to make two stages instead of one and reach Kumishah by nightfall. We passed munition carts and camel caravans, but when we were nearing Kumishah, and when the many pigeon towers—relics of bygone days—had already come into view, a procession of motor-cars whizzed past us. It was the first line of cars I had seen on the road, and I wondered what they might signify. I wondered anxiously, for so many travellers going in my direction roused disconcerting thoughts of the limited space in the telegraph station, and, arrived at the courtyard, I found my worst fears justified. It swarmed with people. The usual servants rushed about, and in addition to these were valets, children with nurse-maids, even a trained European nurse. Obviously there was no room for me, so I sank down on the grass in the middle of the

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courtyard, said " Tea " to Safar, and proceeded to think out what was to be done. That my cot must be set up outside was not a pleasant thought, for Kumishah lies at a considerable altitude, and the night air of March had a keen edge.

But the moment my tea came my troubles were at an end. It was not brought by Safar, nor in my battered, enamel cup, but by a smart Persian servant carrying fine, gold-bordered china and a plate of cakes, who offered them with the compliments of his master, the Ghevam-ul-Mulk. It was the Ghevam, with his entourage, whose dust I had swallowed on the road. He was travelling to Teheran to pass the Nu Ruz festival with his friend, Reza Khan. The Ghevam had ordered a room to be cleared for me, sent in dinner, and, later, joined me.

The idea of a European caravanning in the old-fashioned way amused him greatly, and at my tale of Deh Bid he went into fits of laughter.

Kumishah is a village of importance, but I had less interest in looking into the places where pottery is made, and others where women worked at the camel drivers' coats and the usual carpets, than in the sight of the green bushes and trees, the vegetables and flowers, sprouting up from good, black earth. No wonder the Persians love their

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gardens, and believe them to be the most beautiful on earth, coming to them as they do after days on the desert.

Some time in the morning there came the blast of a horn, loud enough to be heard all over the village. It summoned the men of the village to the bath, and enviously I watched them making their way toward the compound for bathing. I might not join them, for here, in a large settlement, and affected by the conventions of a city not far away, it is a privilege denied to the unbeliever. In the bath-houses of the desert they had been less rigid. Later the horn sounded again, summoning the women.

Only fifteen *farsakhs*, or about fifty-three miles, now lay between me and Isfahan, but two days would be required for the journey. Outside the gates of Kumishah I passed two caravans with not less than a hundred camels in either—a farewell pageant of the desert long to be remembered.

That night we slept in the squalid caravansary at Mahjar, but before sunrise were up and away. When still ten miles from Isfahan, and still among grey mountains, bleak, and without vegetation, Dil Gosha snorted, reared, and all but unseated me. The next moment, with the less ready ear of the human, I heard the sound that had caused

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his panic, the whirr of an aeroplane. High above our horses and donkeys, high above the camel caravan just behind us, it shot its swift way forward between sky and desert ; a passenger aeroplane, bound from Teheran to Hamadan by way of Isfahan. So I was back in the twentieth century after all.

A little later I reached the top of the mountain ridge, and saw, in the distance, a far stretch of flat-roofed houses. The blue dome and slender golden minarets of the great mosque of Isfahan shone in the clear air.

CHAPTER XIII

ISFAHAN

The legend of its founding—Isfahan's past glory—Persian New Year—
Old minarets—Carpets—Christian cemetery—*Tchehel Sotun*.

“ISFAHAN is half of the world,” runs a Persian proverb. The saying probably had its origin during the city's great day under the Sefevi kings, but even yet, with Persia impoverished, and in peril from her neighbours, Isfahan is to the Persians what Rome is to the Italians ; what Delhi is to India ; what the city that represents the best of its art, beauty and memory of power, if not power itself, is to any country whatsoever.

My caravan entered this “ half of the world ” by the road that leads past the Armenian Christian cemetery. We crossed the Allah Verdi Khan bridge, the largest of the three that span the Zindeh Rud, and found ourselves inside the city dominated by the blue-domed mosques and golden minarets. The white, steepled churches in the Armenian suburb, Julfa, by the cemetery, seemed a world away.

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Isfahan is even as beautifully set as Shiraz, with the snow-covered mountains within view, and so near to the Zindeh Rud. No wonder a legend obtains to explain the beauty of the site. It was chosen by so wise and discriminating a person as Solomon, assisted by one almost as sage as himself, the Grand Vizir Azaf. Once, when these two, with many attending genii, sailed the air on a magic carpet, they looked down on the spot where the Zindeh Rud widened into a lake between two snowy mountains at the edge of the desert. Solomon was struck by the beauty of the spot, and spoke of founding a city there. But Azaf said, "It could not be. When the river should be in flood the lake would overflow and your city would be deluged." Then one of the genii, who was named Gav-Khuni, dropped down to the earth and caused the lake to dry up. He reappeared before the Grand Vizir crying, "Look, Azaf!" which is, in Persian, "Azaf Han." The name of the city built on that spot became, by corruption, Isfahan.

There are, of course, other explanations of the name for those who prefer etymology to legend. For instance, that Isfahan means "The armies." In the time of the Sassanian kings the city was one of the centres of the royal army. Isfahan during

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its long history, which stretches back into far antiquity, has known all the ups and downs of fortune. Conquered by the Arabs in the first half of the seventh century, the already ancient Zoroastrian city came under Moslem authority. The dominion of the caliphs made for progress. Isfahan soon became one of the great centres of culture of the Mohammedan world. From that time on, until the coming of the great Mongol conqueror, Tamerlane, Isfahan passed from one power to another, its fortunes falling or rising according to the character of the Persian or Turkish dynasty that at the time held sway. Perhaps the city's darkest hour was when, in 1388, the population revolted against Tamerlane. Revolted to so little purpose that there was a wholesale massacre, and Tamerlane raised a pyramid of seventy thousand Isfahan heads.

With the Sefevis, Isfahan reached the zenith of her glory. Shah Abbas I made the city his capital in 1620. Under his reign, and the reigns of his successors, the greatest buildings and monuments were erected. Theirs were the bridges across the Zindeh Rud ; the great mosque ; *Tchehel Sotun* (forty columns) ; *Hacht-Behecht* (eight paradises) ; and the *Madresseh Madar-i-Chah* (college of the mother of the shah). In the time of Abbas

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the population of the city reached seven hundred thousand, and by the beginning of the eighteenth century Isfahan was the most flourishing city in the world. Chardin, the French traveller, who visited the city and recorded his findings with a passion for exact figures, stated that, at that time, Isfahan had one million people, one hundred and sixty mosques, forty-eight colleges, eighteen hundred caravansaries, and two hundred and seventy-three public baths. The circumference of the city was eighty kilometres. But a famine in 1721, and the coming of the Afghans, were disastrous to the city. Especially under the Kadjars did Isfahan, and her works of art, suffer.

There is little to suggest all the past glory in the present city, which has, by generous counting, one hundred and seventy-five thousand inhabitants. Many ruins there are and much squalor. But she has managed to conserve something of her art and architecture and is now beginning its restoration. Isfahan has the best theological seminary of the Shiah world after Najaf. Her bazaar is the largest in Persia, and her spirit is still that of the Persia of tradition, comparatively untouched by Russian influence from the north, and hardly at all by British influence from the south.

I entered the city from the south, by the back

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door, as it were, and therefore did not see the traffic I should have found on the northern road leading to Teheran ; nor on the western, to Kermanshah. But what the highway lacked in activity it made atonement for in beauty, for I had travelled the Assahrjerih road, which means the road of a thousand acres, and I had passed great, gardened estates owned by Bakhtiari and other chiefs. Immediately across the bridge I found myself in the avenue, *Chahar Bagh* (four gardens), with a double row of plantain trees, slim and stately as poplars. Substantial houses came into view, yellow and white calcimined, with glass windows and shingle roofs. Cars and bicycles spun along this street. The people whom I met were townsfolk, more carefully dressed than any I had seen for months ; there were even three girls in European clothes. Truly I had left the wilderness behind me and was once more in a city.

Two buildings stand side by side on the *Chahar Bagh* ; old-time palaces of the rich that have now become hotels. I rode through the narrow entrance into a paved courtyard ; but I could find no one who could speak any language except Persian. Wearily I turned Dil Gosha's head and, followed by Safar on his *yuba*, made my way to the bazaar, where I knew the Bank of Persia to be. I hoped



(Upper) ISFAHAN FROM THE AIR.

(Lower) ALI VERDI KHAN BRIDGE AT ISFAHAN.

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to find someone who would offer me hospitality. For a little while I wanted to have the English language ring in my ears, and to feel it on my tongue. I felt like a tired *mullah* on horseback as I squeezed my way through the crowded bazaar, brushing against people, camels, and donkeys.

When I reached the bank I found it closed ; doors locked and every window covered with heavy shutters. The nearness of Nu Ruz had given excellent excuse for a holiday, and everyone had gone shooting.

So I returned to the Hôtel d'Isfahan and settled down for the length of my stay. No more dispirited traveller ever arrived to enjoy Nu Ruz with the Persians I truly believe.

I was still ill from the bad food and hardships of the road, and would have been much better in a hospital than in a hotel. Even the opportunity for delicate eating was of no use ; food was not for me as yet. The other guests were all Persian until there arrived an Italian impresario with four women, who claimed to be cabaret performers, but who really were itinerant daughters of joy of assorted European nationalities. They had just finished a month's stay in Resht and Teheran, and were now on their way to Shiraz and points further east. To the other side of my room came a party

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from Sultanabad ; Armenian Americans—a gay group—travelling with their wives.

I felt myself to be the only lonely and down-hearted person in Isfahan. But the hotel was clean and well kept. I gloated over the glass windows and the door that could be shut. These were pleasant changes from life in the mud-huts, but the tooting of motor-car horns at night was not so pleasant a sound as the tinkle of the camels' bells.

I discarded my sheepskin coat and again wore a decent suit of clothes, a shirt, and a collar. But my metamorphosis was as nothing to Safar's ; he appeared in a smart blue suit, and an Astrakhan cap, for which he said he had paid twenty *tomans*. Nor were we the only members of our caravan party who felt the need of dressing up. Gholam, the Professor, and Hassan had stopped with the animals at one of the caravansaries, but when they appeared next day for settlement they were shaved and immaculate. I paid them and said-good-bye, sorry to part with these three good and pleasant men.

Nu Ruz was now upon us ; the Persian New Year, and the twenty-first day of March by our reckoning. The streets were decorated. Flags were flying. Everyone said on meeting, "*Aide*

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schemo mu barak!” (May your feast be happy!). The town was full of red-bearded men, for, just as punctiliously as they donned their best and cleanest clothes, every good Shiah dyed every visible hair with henna. Manes and tails showed that the animals, too, had been touched up with this powdered herb, and they were also decorated with flowers. More dervishes than usual made their begging rounds, and the entire city wore a carnival aspect.

Nu Ruz is the great national fête. Each year this first day of spring is celebrated in grand and solemn fashion by every Persian, rich or poor. Nu Ruz begins at the very moment of the vernal equinox—when the sun crosses the meridian—and lasts thirteen days. During this time the people make and receive visits, and give presents and felicitations on the event of a new year’s commencement. The ceremonies are divided into three parts, and all are governed by tradition ; there is the fête on the eve of Nu Ruz, that of the day itself, and that of the thirteenth day.

By Nu Ruz eve all Persians are gay and clean. The head of each family has ordered a general house-cleaning ; all dirty and worn-out things have been thrown away and replaced with new. Before sunset all who have lost someone by death in the

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course of the past year go to the cemetery. Gifts are made to the poor. It is the custom for each member of the family to be present at table on Nu Ruz eve. They are served with a special preparation of rice and vegetables. The mistress of the house, following ancient custom, has set forth seven edibles, and the name of each must begin with an "S." For instance, *sabzi* (greens); and *sir* (garlic). The assembling of these "S"-beginning foods is called the *Haft Sin*, the seven "S's." None can tell whence this custom comes, but all follow it. Lights burn all night.

On the first day of the year, after the sun has crossed the meridian, everyone puts on his best and newest clothes. The visiting of relatives begins with the oldest and most venerated. There is much embracing in the streets. Gifts of gold and silver are made.

After twelve days of this festivity the Persian is tired, and ready for the pastoral joys of the thirteenth day. The well-to-do go into the country; the less prosperous into their own gardens; the poor into the suburbs. All pass the day in the open air, singing, perhaps in an attempt to drive away the weariness that weighs on their spirits.

My Nu Ruz dinner was eaten with a Persian family, but they were Bahai, and so did not con-

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form to Shiah tradition. And it was by the good fortune of their being Bahai, not Shiah, that there was any dinner at all that day, for in 1927 the beginning of Nu Ruz coincided with the beginning of Ramazan, which is the strictest of Mohammedan feast-days. At five in the morning a gun is fired in Royal Square as a signal that none may eat again until six in the evening.

When I was well enough to begin my sight-seeing, under the guidance of the British consul, I set forth on the trail of Hajji Baba. The barber's shop where his career began is no more, but the caravansary where he lodged the Turcoman still stands. But how sadly transformed! It has become the compound of the A.S.N.E.S.T., the Soviet Oil Company; motor-trucks and barrels of oil now fill the courtyard.

Fiction being disposed of we turned to history, and explored the remains and débris of Isfahan's former splendour, the building surrounding the Royal Square. On one side is the old royal palace, on another the mosque, and the other two are given over to barracks and bazaar.

Most beautiful of all the relics of the Sefevides is the *Tchehel Sotun*, the pavilion in the midst of a garden. Twenty columns sustain the pavilion, but by reflection in the pool below their number seems

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to be doubled ; hence the name, which means forty columns. This building dates from the middle of the seventeenth century, and was the work of Abbas II. Beautiful as is the architecture, the special claim to splendour lies in its frescoes, done by the greatest artists of the time. Under the Kadjars *Tchehel Sotun* was wrecked, like the other Sefevi monuments of Isfahan, and most of the art destroyed. But, lately, restoration has begun. The major of the section of the army residing at Isfahan has installed his offices in the pavilion, has repaired much of the damage that *Tchehel Sotun* suffered, and has salvaged some of the frescoes and other ornamentation.

Six historic pictures decorate the walls of the hall of *Tchehel Sotun*. They show the routing of the Turks by the Persians under Abbas ; an episode of the Turco-Persian War under Selim I of Turkey, and one of the wars of Nadir Shah against the Hindus. Two pictures later than the others depict the reception of Humayah Shah, a fugitive from India, by Shah Eahmasp I. In addition to the large frescoes are many small ones, and similar to the miniature paintings one sees in Persian manuscripts.

The Royal Square itself, the Meidan-i-Shah, is a place of traditional happenings. The pole in the

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centre has been a shooting target for centuries. Myriads of games of polo have been played on that stretch of ground, for polo is one of the most ancient of Persian diversions. The game, together with target-shooting and horseback-riding, were considered necessary to the education of prince and chevalier. Learned treatises were written on these subjects, and professors were employed to give instruction in them. The game of polo spread from Persia eastward to China, Japan, Thibet, and India; westward into the Byzantine Empire. The Dutch and English brought it from India to Europe. Nowadays the Royal Square is watered with sprinkling cans before the horses are ridden out to play, and most of the players are British.

The Royal Mosque loomed before me, but I had to be content with an outside view. The interiors of these sacred buildings are not for the unbeliever, so perhaps he is more impressed by the domes and minarets. Besides the *Minaridjouban*, lying west of the Armenian suburb Julfa, Isfahan has five high and several lower minarets that can be seen for a considerable distance outside the city. Most of these are very old. One bears an inscription indicating that the builder was Seldjukide Malek Shah, and late in the eleventh century.

The highest of these old minarets is the Minar-i-

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Sarabin in the Juibareh Quarter, about twenty minutes by motor from the centre of the city. By some freak of equilibrium a man climbing the spiral stairs in one of the towers causes the other to vibrate enough to be visible to spectators below. Folk-lore has sprung up about this minaret. There is a legend that in bygone days women who were unhappy in their marriages, and believed themselves to be not well loved by their husbands, would place a nut on each step as they climbed the spiral stairs. In coming down they would try to crack these nuts by sitting on them. If a woman was so fortunate as to succeed in this bizarre undertaking she might know that her husband's love would be recovered.

A brisk business went on in Isfahan during the Nu Ruz season, for New Year is a time for settlement as well as festival. Every Persian, rich or poor, demands at least a slight reduction on the grand total of his indebtedness, then makes his best effort to discharge the obligation and begin with a clean slate. I squatted with a native banker on Mokhlasse Street and talked affairs. Most of the business from shopkeepers and *mullahs* goes to him, which makes it hard for the Imperial Bank of Persia to get a foothold.

I revelled in the bazaar, but my quest for art

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objects was not well rewarded. Persia has been ransacked. The new pottery, like the silverware, brass, and textiles, is not worthy of the Persian tradition. Cheap importations from the countries both neighbouring and remote have vitiated the taste. One turns from the silver chiselling of the Sefevide period to examples of modern workmanship with a sick feeling. Persia's day in art is long past. Fortunately the great museums of the world hoard the treasures made in that vanished time ; pottery of an incomparable turquoise colour ; miniatures and manuscripts that seem too exquisite for human hands to have achieved, and carpets that will never again be equalled either in design or in colour.

For carpet-weaving, nowadays, though a house industry, is organised by capital, and has become a thing much less of art than of commerce. British, German, and American firms have local offices in Persia. Designs are sent from the country which is to be the market, and are worked out in the mud-huts by women and girls, descendants, perhaps, of those who sorted and dyed the wool, and knotted the threads that went into that marvel of beauty that is now in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, or the one in the palace at Vienna that was owned by the Emperor Franz Joseph.

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Upon just how evil a day Persian carpetry art has fallen between merchants and purchasers is well shown by a remark made to me by a dealer in Constantinople. "I'd be satisfied to have nothing else in the world if I might own the carpet in the Saint Sophia Mosque here," he said. "It is the biggest and best extant. I'd cut it up and sell it in slices, and make millions." Fortunately most dealers know too well the value of these classic masterpieces in their entirety to commit the vandalism of cutting them up, even in flights of speculative fancy. Still, more fortunately, the great majority of these gems are in museums, or are so carefully guarded as heirlooms that there is small chance of their ever coming into dealer's hands. The whereabouts of every precious old rug is known, and dealers watch for notices of death, or indications of impending bankruptcy, in the hope of obtaining possession of them.

Isfahan is the best of the Persian markets. There I saw carpets from Sultanabad, from Tabriz, and Meshed, and Kashan. Also from Kirman, where a renaissance of the designs of old rugs has lately been attempted under the leadership of a young Swiss. Most of these go to the United States.

The Armenian cemetery I had passed on entering



(Upper) A PERSIAN COBBLER.

(Lower) CARPENTERING WITHOUT A BENCH.

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the city was the object of one of my pilgrimages. Therein lie Dutch and English who, in Isfahan, came to the end of their adventuring during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The cemetery lies between Julfa and Kuh-i-Suffah ; it is a stretch of desert land, unfenced to this day because of one of the conditions made by Shah Abbas when he granted the ground to the Armenians for a burial-place for the Christian dead. The graves are covered with heavy, stone slabs, and the epitaphs cut into the face of them show little wear by time or weather. The cemetery is rarely visited except by Armenians going to the graves of their own, and a few Europeans who are interested in the old epitaphs and armorial bearings. There are rich clues for those who are tracing the importance of the Netherlands East Indian Company, even before the coming of the British. One epitaph shows that Shah Abbas imported his diamond cutter from Holland. And there are here, as in every cemetery, the poignant human stories of those cut down in the flower of life, and of those who had no chance to live. Side by side are the graves of a seven-months-old boy and of his mother ; wife and son of a scion of the illustrious French family de Chatillon.

Such wanderings and diversions passed the time

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in Hajji Baba's home city. "You will find no more Persia north of Isfahan," my European friends told me, and I myself was sorry to go on. But there came a day when Safar, dressed in his Nu Ruz best, took my caravan trousers, and his own old clothes over his arm, and went forth in quest of a second-hand dealer. He sold, too, all my caravan outfit, except the enamel teapot, drove a good bargain, and sent the money straightway to his partner in the Bagdad coffee-shop, over which his mother and fiancée keep a vigilant eye on his behalf.

But the time I had had in real Persia did not seem to be over until I had sold Dil Gosha, and even now I do not like to think of his future. I greatly fear that there will not come into his life another human anachronism who prefers a horse to a motor-car for crossing the mountains and the desert. I greatly fear that the heart-shaped amulet hanging from his neck will not save him from the pain of pulling heavy loads, and that some day his beautiful body will lie, a neglected skeleton, by the roadside.

CHAPTER XIV

TEHERAN

The highway—Kum, Fatimah's holy city—Persia at its most modern—
Reza Shah—A salaam at Ghulistan palace.

I LEFT Isfahan for the north in a car with the feeling that Persia was behind me ; nor was this merely because every European had sounded a warning that on account of Russian influence I should find no more Persia north of Isfahan. Teheran would be the next and the last high spot in my Iranian journey, and no capital seems to me to reflect the characteristic life of the people of a country. It is always less the sum of the forces at work than a fusion of forces ; a chemical rather than a total result. In Teheran I should see, not the bits of daily life that had captivated me along the way, not the remnants of ancient Persia miraculously preserved in the present, but the trend of the country, mediæval Persia lamely struggling toward modernism. To have come to Isfahan by animal caravan was fitting, but for these reasons a motor-car was appropriate for the completion of the journey.

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But those who told me I should find no more Persia north of Isfahan had forgotten Kum. The shrine city of Fatimah, sister of *Imam* Reza, is older than Isfahan, and, though only ninety-seven miles from Teheran, has lost nothing of its antiquity of spirit. That motor-trucks laden with goods stand side by side with camels similarly laden at the gates of the large caravansary does not greatly affect this atmosphere of age. The city is essentially old. Notes of modernity seem accidental, anachronistic, not even prophetic.

A holy city itself, Kum is the cross-roads centre for pilgrims bound for Meshed and Najaf. About fifty miles south of the city the clay begins to show a reddish tint, and no geological explanation for this coloration would be accepted by the faithful. "The soil here has been reddened by the blood of the martyrs," a *mullah* told me.

For many miles before reaching the city the golden dome of the mosque is visible. This sight, moving even to the unbeliever, is a beacon to pilgrims. Each one prostrates himself when his eyes catch the first glint of gold in the distance, and he puts on the ground a fragment of stone he has carried from afar in anticipation of this high moment. It is a symbol of the house in the other world which shall be his when his pilgrimage on



VIEW FROM THE ROAD BETWEEN KUM AND TEHERAN OF MOUNT DEMAVEND.

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earth shall be completed. For acres beyond each of Kum's gates the ground is littered with these tiny corner-stones of celestial mansions.

Kum lies in a basin on the two banks of the Kum Rud. A prophecy that some day the city will be inundated has come down through the generations, but thus far there have apparently been no floods that have wrought great damage. The little city stands, old, compelling, tempting the traveller to linger, but he knows that no length of loitering can bring him any nearer to the real city than does his first impressionistic glimpse. These holy cities reveal themselves to the faithful, never to the alien.

I crossed the bridge from the caravansary under the escort of the chief-of-police. He gave me information in French, and especially cautioned me against going too close to the mosque. Without his warning I might have been tempted to an indiscreet approach, for here is the mosque that no reader of Hajji Baba will ever forget. The one that gave him sanctuary in that long, dark hour when his luck seemed to have deserted him, and justice was hot on his trail because of his sins, indiscretions, and general trickiness.

From my contemplation of the mosque I turned toward the bazaar. Here would be no gate closed

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against the outsider. Business, notwithstanding all the charges of sordidness made against it, is an excellent promoter of understanding and friendship between peoples. If one person wishes to buy and another to sell there is a common ground to stand on while the two become acquainted.

Tiles, and old illuminated ink horns, carved silver and lovely bits of painted fabric, were spread before my admiring eyes, and sent my hand into my pocket. But the special ware of the Kum bazaar is a cake, as purely indigenous to this shrined city as are *Lebkuchen* to Nuremberg. Chauffeurs and muleteers came for it in generous quantities. Even their pilgrims, their pious devotions over, hurried to the bazaar for Kum cakes. Hard and shining, with bits of crystallised sugar, they were, I must confess, not specially delicious to my Western palate, which had no generations of tradition to make it eager. That night I felt I was the only European in Kum, so Persian is Fatimah's shrine city.

Beyond Kum the road to Teheran crosses the desert and skirts the sixty-mile length of Daria-i-Namak, the great salt lake, and, during the last stretch of forty miles, Persia's most lofty mountain looms in the distance beyond the city; Mount Demavend, with its eighteen thousand six hundred

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feet, the highest point in the jagged skyline of peaks.

Because of the undulating country crossed, one loses the view of these mountains and then finds it again. But my interest in this fascinating game of hide-and-seek ended twenty miles out of Teheran when something went wrong with our engine, and we were left stranded on the road. The chauffeur's efforts at repair were of no avail. A car, flying the Union Jack, stopped to see what was the matter, and I was spun over the rest of the distance in one of the cars belonging to the British Legation ; through the arched and pinnacled southern gateway, on across the vacant space before the crowded, squalid streets begin, and, at last, into Lalezar, the main thoroughfare of Persia's capital.

In Teheran the traveller has the lavish choice of three hotels ; one under French, one under Polish, and the third under Persian management. I went to the last. It proved to be modern in that there was a bathroom, but hot water was obtainable only after several hours' notice. The dining-room had a few European guests, but the clientele was chiefly made up of Persian gentlemen in *abas*, who played chess after the meal. Rich merchants, most of them, probably staying in

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the city on business, and much less interesting to me than the homely folk I had met along the way.

My room on the first floor gave on Lalezar Street, and I could look on the very life of the capital as it manifests itself on the pavements. Along came Turcomans, so picturesque that the urban people they jostled had no chance to win first attention. They had driven to the city in carts, horse-drawn, or had ridden ponies which looked inconceivably small under these big men, so top-heavy looking in their huge turbans. With venerable white beards brushing their chests, belted blouses that reached to their knees, each man an arsenal, they were pictures out of some old book, and it seemed impossible that they were real figures in a modern world. These were men of a wild tribe, with skill and prowess in banditry ; a high ideal to be struggled for.

On the side-paths were many young officers, smartly uniformed. There was no unmixed Persia in this atmosphere ; not even a faintly European element, either central or western. It suggested Russia in the days when Leningrad was St. Petersburg. I heard much Russian spoken and saw many Russian shops. Indeed, so well within the sphere of Russian influence is Teheran that one speaks

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French whenever possible, because it is so much more popular than English.

Most of the civilian heads were covered with *kholas*. There were fewer green turbans marking *Seyjids* than I had seen in the southern cities. *Abas*, worn over European clothes, indicated that Persian men are moving toward European dress.

But not so the women. They were out in numbers in Lalezar Street, but always veiled. Small feet and a glimpse of slender ankles—some, alas! in pink stockings—showed below their black silk dominoes. The young officers gazed ardently at these mysteriously shrouded figures as they passed, with heads held high that they might look out under the eyeshade holding the *chadah* at a little distance from the face. The expression on the faces of the men was eloquent evidence that swathings of black do not greatly interfere with magnetic interchanges of the eyes.

I saw the face of only one Persian lady during my stay in Teheran; a woman of great beauty and the wife of one of the Dekkans. The follower of a remunerative profession, for she is obstetrician and midwife, it is natural she should be a pioneer in dress; but even she would only go unveiled in the presence of a male stranger in her own house. Zorah Khanum, educated in Russia and widow of a

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Russian, the only Persian lady in Teheran who has completely discarded the veil, was absent from the city during my stay. She had not yet returned from America, where she had carried through a magnificent and high-handed project of representing Persia at the Sesquicentennial Exposition in Philadelphia. This was done even in face of the opposition of Persian cabinet ministers, for she won the support of the Persian Legation in Paris.

It is significant that her daring exploit was not mentioned to me by any Persian. All that was said in regard to the liberation of women was that a society, sponsored by men, had been formed to follow Turkey's lead and bring about the eventual disuse of the veil, but that, thus far, little progress had been made. I also heard a rumour that Reza Shah favoured this innovation, but hesitated to take action lest he further antagonised the clergy.

A young professor, now resident in Paris, said to me that the change in dress must come eventually, but would come naturally when modern transportation has become a reality in Persia ; for, with facilities for travel, women will move from place to place, and the veil, which is the symbol of their seclusion, will inevitably disappear. Another Persian who had lived in Europe expressed



(Upper) TOMB OF SHAH ABDUL AZIM.
(Lower) A PERSIAN GARDEN NEAR TEHERAN.

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a wish for marriage as it exists in Occidental lands, where the wife is a companion. All these expressions of opinion were as tiny straws showing the direction of the wind.

Meanwhile the League of Patriotic Women, officered by graduates of the American School for Women in Teheran, has not yet dared to advocate unveiling. Educational opportunities and something of enlightenment these women are struggling to give to other women. It is estimated that there are now about five thousand adult women in Persia who can read and write ; a result traceable to the work of the American school, the first school in Persia open to women and which has now been established for fifty years.

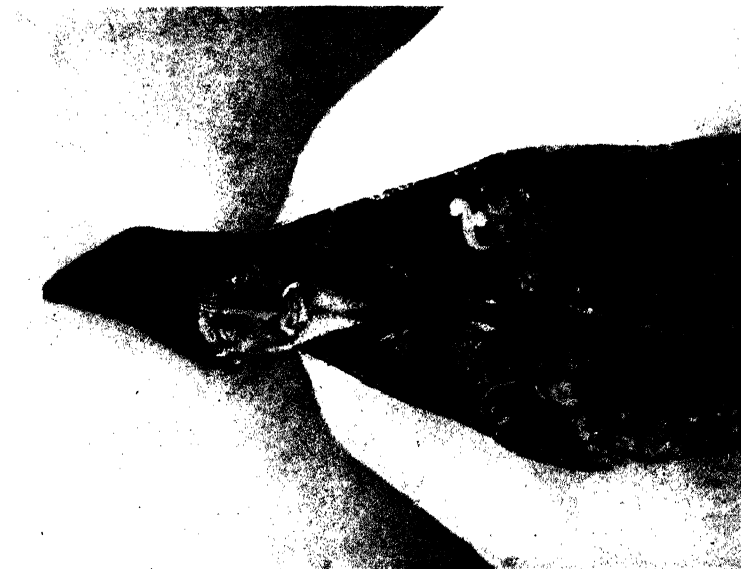
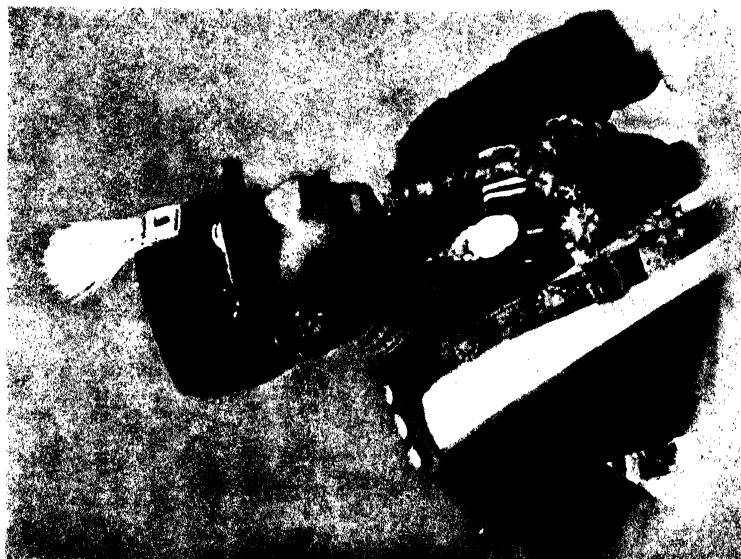
I glimpsed another modern trend on the evening I was taken to a Bahai meeting. This was held in a private house, given over to the service of this interloping faith. Our signal-knock, without which we should not have been admitted, was eloquent of the necessary secrecy. Harmless enough the meeting seemed ; men of all ages, some very young, some grey-haired, were assembled in a room and talked over tea and cakes. But it was not harmless to existing institutions, and the most interesting figure was an old *mujhtahid* who had renounced Shiahism to become Bahai.

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These new conditions, rather than the remnants of old history, are the things sought as one goes about the streets, or loiters in Tup Meidan (Gun Square), which is the heart of Teheran. Barracks line two sides of Tup Meidan and an arsenal the third. On the east is the Bank of Persia, between two ornate and arched gateways. Nasiriyeh Gate, at the southern end, leads to the bazaar. Dowlet Gate, at the north end, gives entrance to the royal palaces. The ranks of drilling soldiers are of far more importance to modern Persia than the row of historic cannon which gives the square its name.

Moreover Teheran is, as Persian cities go, an upstart, since it dates only from the twelfth century, though built near the ruins of Rhagae, the capital of ancient Medea. Its changing, fitful story is less colourful than that of Isfahan, and less splendid than that of Shiraz. Some of the earlier shahs made the city their temporary headquarters, but with the founding of the Kadjar dynasty, late in the eighteenth century, it became the permanent capital.

Aga Mahomet Khan, the savage eunuch, and the first of the Kadjars, brought to Teheran the remains of Nadir Shah and Kerim Khan, and buried them under the threshold of the new royal palace that he might have the satisfaction of



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treading on them whenever he entered or left his door. He brought, too, the splendid throne made of Yezd marble from Kerim's royal palace and placed it in his own. The Tup-i-Murvarid, Cannon of Pearls, he brought from the royal square at Shiraz, and had it set up in the Meidan-i-Shah.

There are various stories about this cannon of pearls. One legend credits it with having been cast for Kerim Khan, and another says that it was captured from the Portuguese. But even yet it is sanctuary to any criminal who claims its shelter, and it is touched by the credulous in the faith that contact will ensure the fulfilment of wishes.

Here, in the Meidan-i-Shah and the adjacent palaces, one finds the history of the Kadjars. To Fath Ali Shah, builder and expander of the city, most splendid of the Kadjar line, came most of the Western art that is of any value in Ghulistan palace, and as gifts from European monarchs and diplomats. Persia was being wooed in those days, for it was a country of growing importance, and Western powers sought places of vantage.

Nasr-ed-Din, the first of the shahs to tour Europe, came home with a love of the Occident, especially of Paris, and tried to give something of its spirit to his capital. But neither his eyes nor those of that late Kadjar who bought out whole sections

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of department stores and had them transported to Ghulistan, and however trained to Persian art values, could discriminate in the West ; hence the untold numbers of tawdry articles that stand side by side with treasure in the Persian royal palace.

European Teheran still resounds with the tale of the load of gimcracks cleared from the throne-room at Ghulistan when it was being made ready for Reza's coronation, and the Prime Minister gave two English ladies a free hand at renovation. Much was accomplished in the throne-room, but the clearing away process evidently did not reach to the salon where I was served with tea, and put my cigarette on a tin ash-tray decorated with the coloured picture of a girl possessed of luxuriant golden locks.

This litter of cheap and unworthy ornaments shared space with paintings, mirrors, and priceless rugs, even with the Nadir throne set with its uncut pearls, emeralds, rubies, diamonds, and turquoises, and called the Peacock Throne, and also with the real Peacock Throne, which is believed to have been designed by Fath Ali Shah as a bed for a slave girl, the Peacock Lady of Isfahan.

The day before I left Teheran Reza Shah held the grand salaam which marks the end of the Ramazan feast. I was fortunate enough to be a guest, and, after the formal ceremonies were over

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in the throne-room of the Ghulistan palace, I found myself within hand-shaking distance of the man who is, I believe, one of the most interesting figures in the world to-day.

But we are now too close to realities, and, in consequence, it wants a little perspective to reveal how romantic a figure Reza is. The son of a peasant, worker at various menial occupations, soldier in a Cossack regiment, Prime Minister, and now Shah-in-Shah, King of Kings, seated on the throne of Cyrus. To have taken Pahlavi, the name of the ancient Persian language, for his surname at a time when titles were abolished, and other men selected names that ranged from birds to the God of Goodness, was a proud and splendid choice.

Reza Khan become Pahlavi, and Reza Shah founded the Pahlavi dynasty when he mounted the throne brought by Nadir from Delhi two centuries ago, and placed on his own head the crown that had been made for himself and for the Pahlavis who shall succeed him. It was a dramatic gesture worthy of Napoleon.

All the elements that go to the making of the Persia of the present day, and of the probable future, were in evidence at this salaam. First of all, Reza Shah himself, with his more than six feet of height, towering above his ministers. An

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enormous diamond shone in his military cap, and a huge emerald locket hung from a gold band on his collar. Rumour says that the locket contains the miniature of Ali. Reza does not wish to antagonise the clergy more than he can help, so wears the holy symbols.

Near him stood the crown prince, a ten-year-old mite of a child, also in uniform. A tower-like building in the garden is set aside for the child's uses, and there, for long hours every day, the little prince works at mathematics, history, and languages, with his tutors. The next shah will be fitted, if Reza's plans can make it so, to cope with the modern world.

Reza's ministers were near him, but below the dais on which he stood. The Ghevam-ul-Mulk was there, and other Persians of great importance in this significant hour. Men of the various diplomatic corps, in their regalia, or in full evening dress, though the reception was at nine o'clock in the morning, made the Russian minister look something of a ruffian in his field-grey uniform and Trotzky cap with tassel. Outstanding in that pageant of colour were the men of the American Finance Commission, wearing their silk *abas* over European clothes in deference to the customs of the country ; an unconscious symbol of the tact and

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skill with which Dr. A. C. Millspaugh and his helpers have directed the financial affairs of Persia since 1922. These men act as treasurers and auditors, bearing a strong hand in civil service and in all foreign policy that affects financial or commercial matters.

Prayers were chanted in the great audience-chamber at the end of the ceremony. Outside in the Meidan-i-Shah troops awaited the royal review. Reza and the small crown prince then came on to one of the terraces, and the ministers stood near. Other functionaries and the invited guests took respectively such place as tradition and chance dictated, while the picked companies of Reza's army filed past. A battery of guns sounded the final salute and the salaam was over.

To most of those present this was only the salaam marking the end of the Ramazan feast. But to me, who would leave the Persian capital next day, it was like the *ensemble* before the drop of the curtain.

CHAPTER XV

THE RUSSIAN WAY OUT

Soviet influence in Persia—Across Transcaucasia—Last reminder of Persia.

NOTWITHSTANDING the treaty of 1921 with the Russian Soviet Republic the northern part of Persia is in Russian hands. This is a matter of common acceptance throughout Persia. The Russian sphere of influence could hardly have been more definite and more powerful between the years 1907 and 1921—when, by the terms of the Anglo-Russian Treaty, definite regions were claimed by each of these powers because of special geographical and economic interests—than it is to-day when Soviet Russia has technically and ostensibly surrendered back to Persia every concession granted to Czaristic Russia, except the Caspian Sea fisheries. The swarms of Russians in the streets of the cities in North Persia, the names over shops, the constant sound of the Russian tongue, the occasional presence of soldiers, all show that domination has not been appreciably lessened by



STATUE OF LENIN AT TIFLIS

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the fact that technically the Russian sphere of influence is a thing of the past ; that it, too, seemed to have gone to limbo with so much else during the revolution.

One begins to feel this Russian influence at Isfahan. At Teheran the air is charged with it, and every North Persian city is a centre for Bolshevik propaganda. Since it was Persia and not Russia that I had come to see I did not tarry long in the northern district of alien domination. My way out of Persia lay through the Federated Soviet Republic of Transcaucasia, and thus I left by the classic Iranian road ; through that part of Azerbaijan which had been Persian before it was conquered by Russia ; and through Georgia, the State which lost its two thousand years of independence by being forcibly annexed to Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but which was a part of the Persian kingdom in Persia's greatest day. There is nothing there of Persia now but a mosque or two, and little enough of old Russia in all Transcaucasia. The huge statue of Lenin in Tiflis tells the entire story.

I travelled by aeroplane from Teheran to Baku, the Caspian seaport, which is the eastern gateway to Transcaucasia. At Pahlavi, Persia's northern port, we made a landing for exit visas, and the

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beginning of Russian formalities. The Russian consulate at Teheran had seemed cold and forbidding, but it was welcome itself compared with this at Pahlavi, a stone fortress guarded by soldiers, and with iron gates and barbed-wire fencing. Outside in the harbour an armoured cruiser in battle grey, flying the red flag, lay at anchor beside a little cream-coloured boat with sun and lion on a white ground between green and red. Russia's and Persia's strength in the Caspian.

Except for certain scenes which were reminders of Russia's grasp on North Persia, and the reasons for it, my experiences in Transcaucasia have no place in the Persian story. One of these reminders came with the view of the oil fields outside of Baku—a forest of derricks similar, though less well equipped, to those I had seen in the British sphere of influence. And along the more than five hundred miles of railway between Baku and Batum—the railway that from Tiflis to Batum follows the old road once traversed by wild Caucasian tribes—I was constantly within sight of the pipeline which carries the oil from the Soviet-owned fields to the shipping station at Batum. The oil interests in the north and south are, of course, only one reason for the vigilant eye which Russia and Great Britain keep each on the other across Persia,

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but that they are a significant reason, I believe any Briton, Russian, or Persian will admit.

My last and happiest reminder of Persia came on Turkish ground, and it was not a reminder of the country of modern, industrial, and political struggle, but of the Persia of history and imagination, and of her own unchanging people. At Trebizond, over the top of the hill from which Xenophon, and what was left of the ten thousand, looked down on the sea, a symbol of home to them, I saw a line of camels emerge ; a caravan from Tabriz, whence Xenophon and his men also had come.

And by the magic of that moving silhouette of humped, laden, forward-lurching beasts I saw once more the blue of the Persian sky, the deserts and the snow-capped mountains, the tents of the nomads, the mud villages and the ruined castle. I saw all that goes to the making of Persia—a picture-conjuring word.

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